ROUND-UP AT SUN PRAIRIE by WALT COBU

15¢

8/49

Adventure

FIRST COMMAND by WALTER HAVIGHURST

THOMAS H. RADDALL

F. R. BUCKLEY

10¢ A DAY— buys a Diamond or Famous Watch

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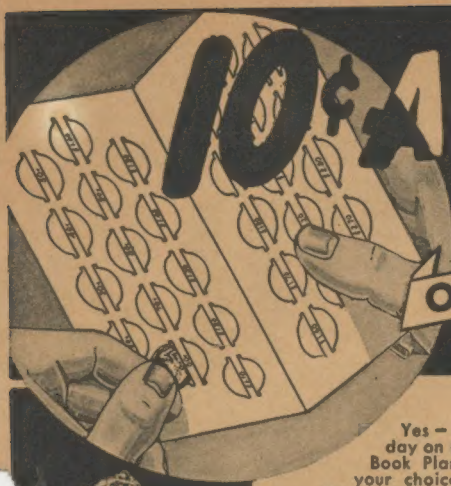

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WHAT I'LL DO:

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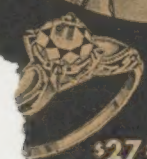
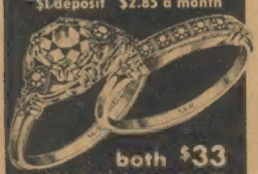


$27.50

Brilliant Cut Diamond Engagement Ring. Yellow gold.

$1 deposit $2.85 a month



both $33

A84—Bridal Set. 8 Brilliant Cut Diamonds. 14K yellow gold.

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$35.75

D122—Man's Twin Ring. Diamond and simulated blue sapphire. 14K yellow gold. $1 deposit $3.48 mo.

$22

I157—Man's Initial Ring. Diamond; 2 initials on black onyx. 14K yellow gold.

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R154
17 JEWELS
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M140
15 JEWELS
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Bulova Watch Features for Men and Women. Both 10K yellow rolled gold plate case. Order by number.

$1 deposit
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17 JEWELS
$22.50

0567
15 JEWELS
$22.50

Famous Benrus Watch Features. Both 10K yellow rolled gold plate cases. Order by number.

$1 deposit
$2.10 a month

$27.50

K308 — Waterproof Watch for Service Men. Sweepsecond. 17 jewels; 10K yellow rolled gold plate.

$1 dep. $2.65 a mo.

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New York, N. Y.

Enclosed find $1 deposit. Send me No._____ Price $_____. I agree to pay the balance in 10 equal monthly payments, otherwise I'll return selection and you will refund my dollar.

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Dept 12-D 1670 BROADWAY, NEW YORK

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RADIO TECHNICIANS in Demand
More Needed Now Than Ever Before

RADIO TECHNICIANS, OPERATORS hold good jobs in the 882 Broadcasting Stations in the U.S. with average pay among the country's best paid industries. Aviation, Police, Commercial, Marine, Government Radio, forging ahead even during the War, employ Radio Technicians and Operators. Soldiers, Sailors, Marines with Radio training win extra rank, pay, are ready for good jobs after their military service is over. I train you to be ready when Television opens jobs in the future. Mail the Coupon for complete details.

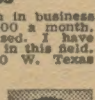
REPAIRING, SERVICING, home and auto Radio sets (there are now 50,197,000 in use) gives good jobs to thousands, offers more opportunities now than ever. Loudspeaker Systems are another source of profit for Radio Technicians. Many Radio Technicians operate their own spare time or full time Radio business, servicing, repairing, selling Radio sets. Get the facts. Mail the coupon.

These Men and Hundreds More Got Their Start This Way

$200 a Month in Own Business

For several years I have been in business for myself making around $200 a month. Business has steadily increased. I have N. R. I. to thank for my start in this field. —ARLIE J. FROEHNER, 300 W. Texas Ave., Goose Creek, Texas.

$5 to $10 Extra a Week in Spare Time



I am engaged in spare time Radio work. I average from $5 to $10 a week. I often wished that I had enrolled sooner because all this extra money sure does come in handy.—THEODORE K. DuBREE, Horsham, Penna.

Operating Naval Radio Station

I am now operating the Radio Range Station, one of the new simultaneous types, here at the Naval Air Station. Glad to give N. R. I. its share of credit in the success I have had thus far.—GRIFFITH SECHLER, Radioman First Class, U.S. Navy (Address omitted for military reasons.)

Learn At Home To Make $30 $40 $50 a Week

MAIL THE COUPON! Find out about the many opportunities Radio offers you to make more money quickly and to prepare yourself for a good-pay job after the War. Whether you're eligible for military service or exempt, you should get my 64-page Book, "Rich Rewards in Radio." It's FREE. It tells about Radio's present and future opportunities and how I train beginners at home in spare time to be Radio Technicians and Operators; how I teach operating principles of Army, Navy, Civilian Defense Radio equipment.

5 Reasons Why You Should Learn Radio Now

(1) **The Radio Repair Business is Booming.** Because of the shortage of new sets, and increased interest in Radio programs, fixing Radios offers many extra new opportunities for Radio Technicians. (2) **U. S. Government is calling** for thousands of CIVILIAN Radio Technicians, Operators and is paying well for their services. (3) **Government Orders for Radio Equipment,** amounting to millions of dollars are creating opportunities for men with Radio training to earn good pay, overtime. (4) **Radio is Ready to Expand After the War.** Television, Frequency Modulation Electronic Instruments and Controls will offer new opportunities in the future. (5) **Extra Pay in Army, Navy, Too!** Radio Training offers men likely to enter military service, soldiers, sailors, marines, many opportunities to win extra rank, extra prestige, more interesting duty and earn up to 6 times a private's base pay.

Why Many Radio Technicians Make $30, $40, $50 a Week

Radio is one of the country's fastest-growing peacetime industries. It is vital industry during wartime, too. That's why N.R.I. trained Radio Technicians and Operators earn good pay in practically every branch of Radio today: in Broadcasting, Aviation, Commercial, Police, Marine, Government Radio Stations; in Radio Factories; fixing Radio sets in spare time or full time; in Radio businesses of their own. Many fields of Radio are expanding fast during the war. Many more new branches of Radio (Television, Frequency Modulation, etc.), held back now, will create new peacetime opportunities after the war. N. R. I. gives you the required knowledge of Radio to take advantage of these present and future opportunities.

Beginners Soon Learn to Make $5, $10 a Week Extra in Spare Time

Part time Radio Technicians have more opportunities now than ever before. In fact, many men I train prefer to hold their regular jobs, and make extra money fixing Radio sets in their spare time. I give you special training and show you how to start fixing Radios early. You also get my **6 Big Kits of Radio Parts** and instructions for building test equipment, for conducting experiments which give you valuable, practical experience. My fifty-fifty method—half working with real Radio parts, half studying my lesson texts—makes learning Radio at home interesting, fascinating, practical.

Find Out How I Train You for Good Pay in Radio—NOW!

MAIL THE COUPON BELOW! I'll send my big 64-page book FREE. It tells about my Course; the types of jobs in the different branches of Radio today; Radio's opportunities for the future; shows letters from more than 100 men I trained so you can see what civilian and service men are doing, earning. You owe it to yourself to get these facts NOW. MAIL THE COUPON in an envelope or pasted on a penny postcard.

J. E. SMITH, President
Dept. 2DS9, National Radio Institute
Washington, D. C.

MAIL NOW for Quick Action

J. E. SMITH, President, Dept. 2DS9
National Radio Institute, Washington, D. C.

Mail me FREE, without obligation, your 64-page book "Rich Rewards in Radio" which tells about Radio's opportunities now and for the future. (No salesman will call. Write plainly.)

Name ..... Age.....

Address .....

City ..... State.....

MAY ISSUE ON SALE APRIL 10TH

Adventure

(Registered U. S. Patent Office)

Vol. 106, No. 6 for April, 1942 Best of New Stories

Round-Up at Sun Prairie (a novelette) . . . . . WALT COBURN 10
It was the biggest gatherment Montana had ever seen—five cattle outfits all camped within spittin' distance of each other. Sheriff Ike Niber said if a gun ruckus was to start it'd make the Battle of Gettysburg look like a schoolmarm's picnic. It started, all right, and before the smoke cleared away the lawman knew he'd made the prize understatement of the year.

The Drumlin of Joe Tom . . . . . THOMAS H. RADDALL 41
"I wish to God you'd never found it, Joe Tom!" my father burst out when the old Micmac reported his precious discovery. And I came to wish so, too—down through the years—for it was a stone that made a coldness in more than one heart despite its golden glow.

Tanks Ain't Horses . . . . . FREDERICK WILKINS 52
Take a hardboiled, bred-in-the-bone cavalryman, force him to trade his saddle for a seat atop several clanking tons of steel that feed on high test gas instead of oats and hay, and all hell is sure to pop.

Kangaroo? (verse) . . . . . CRIS 63

Scalp Scoop (a fact story) . . . . . BRUCE NELSON 64
Eastern readers mobbed the newsstands and rival editors tore their hair in anguish for only one paper, Mr. Bennett's *Herald*, had the story—"for stark tragedy, horror and surprise, the greatest news beat ever flashed over a telegraph wire to a stunned and stricken country."

Live by the Sword (3rd part of 4) . . . . . F. R. BUCKLEY 70
Mad! We were all mad! A household of lunatics caught in Cesare Borgia's web, and the Duke of Hell—he gloried in his nickname—nurtured our delusions so long as they served his purpose. Then, when he'd squeezed us dry, cold steel or the poison cup was our portion.

First Command . . . . . WALTER HAVIGHURST 102
Away from the flaming tanker rowed what remained of the *Selkirk's* crew. With a kind of terrible, lonely pride Second Mate Byer took the helm. His first command—a boatload of wounded on a waste of sea.

The Camp-Fire . . . . . Where readers, writers and adventurers meet 111

Ask Adventure . . . . . Information you can't get elsewhere 118

The Trail Ahead . . . . . News of next month's issue 128

Lost Trails . . . . . Where old paths cross 6

Cover painted for Adventure by R. E. Lougheed

Kenneth S. White, Editor

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"LIFE WAS SLIPPING THROUGH HIS ICY FINGERS!"

A true experience of special policeman FRANK HAHNEL, *New York, N. Y.*

"IT WAS STILL DARK...and bitter cold on the waterfront...when I finished my night patrol," writes Mr. Hahnel. "I had paused for a moment to say hello to a couple of friends when above the dismal sounds of the river came a piercing shriek and a heavy splash. Then there was silence.

"WE RUSHED FOR THE WHARF. I yanked out my flashlight and turned it on the water. There in the icy river 14 feet below we saw a man struggling feebly...clawing at the ice-sheathed pilings as the out-racing tide sucked him away from the pier.

"QUICKLY I DARTED my light about and located a length of line on a nearby barge...and a life preserver on an adjoining pier. In an instant the preserver splashed in the water beside the drowning man. Dazed from shock and cold, half clinging to the preserver and half lassoed by the line, he was dragged to safety. Thanks to my 'Eveready' flashlight and its dependable *fresh* DATED batteries the river was cheated of its victim. *(Signed)* Frank J. Hahnel"

The word "Eveready" is a registered trade-mark of National Carbon Company, Inc.

FRESH BATTERIES LAST LONGER... *Look for the* **DATE-LINE**

NATIONAL CARBON COMPANY, INC., 30 EAST 42nd STREET, NEW YORK, N. Y.

Unit of Union Carbide and Carbon Corporation

UCC

LOST TRAILS

NOTE: We offer this department to readers who wish to get in touch again with friends or acquaintances separated by years or chance. Give your own name and full address. Please notify *Adventure* immediately should you establish contact with the person you are seeking. Space permitting, each inquiry addressed to *Lost Trails* will be run in three consecutive issues. Requests by and for women are declined, as not considered effective in a magazine published for men. *Adventure* also will decline any notice that may not seem a sincere effort to recover an old friendship, or for any other reason in the judgment of the editorial staff. No charge is made for publication of notices.

John C. Carl, General Delivery, San Angelo, Texas, would like to hear from his old Camp Dodge pal, Albert Gilder.

Would like to hear from my good friend Bert A. Landon, formerly of Teaneck, N. J. I left New Jersey about 5 years ago and the only information I have about him is that he most likely is residing in California. Charles F. Lupton, 46 Chestnut St., Lockport, N. Y.

Would like to hear from any of my old friends who served with me in the 59th C.A.C. or the 31st Inf. in Philippines and China from 1930 to 1932. Also any of the boys who knew me at Fort Missoula, Mont. Charles Pinkerton, Grandview San., Moundsville, W. Va.

Would like to locate my uncle, Joseph L. Campbell, generally called Shorty Campbell. Age 64, height 5 ft. 4½ in.; practically bald; pipe smoker, and fond of children. Last seen in August, 1931, at Texarkana, Tex. Please communicate with Joseph L. Pyles, Box 336, Lordsburg, N. M.

Would like to establish contact with John Henry "Mickey" McGuire and Harold "Rube" Gordon with whom I was in recruit camp at Langley Field, Va., in November, 1939. Write P.F.C. William M. Bell, Jr., c/o *Adventure*.

I would like to contact members of the crew of U. S. S. Alabama, 1900 to 1905. J. D. McCulley, Seaman, U. S. S. Alabama, 849 Aberdeen Street, Akron, Ohio.

Would like to contact some of the boys who were in Clear Creek CCC Camp, S-53, Co. 353, at Sigel, Pa. Will be glad to hear from any of the officers or boys. Write to Edward "Baldy" Stankosky, 369 Main St., New Britain, Conn.

John Todd, formerly of Woodstock, Vermont, who worked with me in Chicago in 1937, and was last heard of in South Bend, Ind. Please get in touch with your old friend, Bill Gean, Box 6, Mencen, Pa. Very important news for you.

Roy Sallars, former resident of Ucross, Wyoming, graduate of Clearmont High School, 1937. Anyone knowing his whereabouts, please write to Pvt. Wallace Vannay, c/o *Adventure*.

Would appreciate information about my father, Joseph Warner. About 6 ft. tall and weighs 225 pounds, sandy hair and a ruddy complexion. I last saw him in 1926, when I was 8 years old. He lived on Sands St., Brooklyn, N. Y., owned an army and navy store; worked in garage as mechanic, was a night watchman and did private detective work. Franklin Warner, 384 Prospect Ave., Buffalo, N. Y.

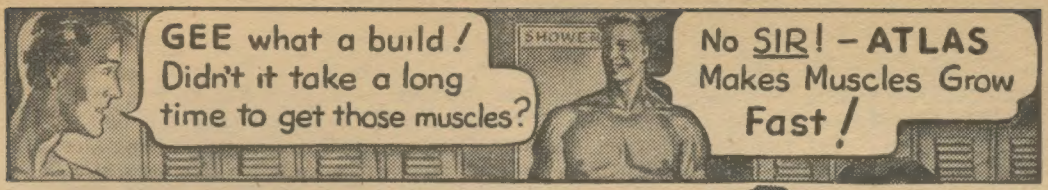
Stanley F. Wilde who was at Great Lakes in 1917 and 1918, later in medical corps in Brooklyn Hospital, and later foreman on U.S.S. *Bali*. Write an old friend. R. E. Gardner, 3258 North Ave., Chicago, Ill.

Am anxious to get in touch with several old friends who were with me in Cardina, Mex., in 1911:—Jack Yentor, Chas. Castle, John Conn, Johnny Welsh, Peon Jackson, Logan Teague. All were locomotive engineers with Old Mexican Central Railway out of Cardenas S.L.P. Mexico, 1908 to 1912. Also, George Stevenson, last heard of as with Seaboard Airline Railway, Raleigh, N. C., in 1920.

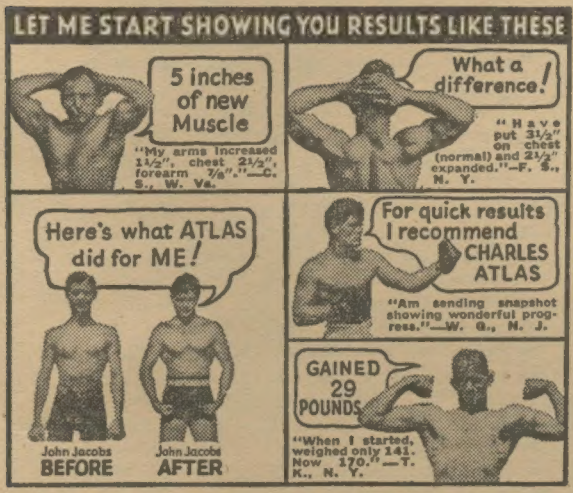
Also, any original members of B Co., No. 5 Platoon 27th Batn., 6th Brigade C.E.F. who were in France and Belgium 1915 to 1918. W. D. Addison, 5128 Camp Street, New Orleans, La.

David Armstrong, son of a physician, was a Corporal in the U. S. Army, Signal Corps, Corozal, Panama, with me during 1930-33. He stayed in the Army a year longer than I. Last seen in Philadelphia, Pa., believed to have married, and now living in San Francisco. If you see this, Dave, please get in touch with your old friend. Louis M. Headley, 1204 No. W. 29th Ter., Miami, Fla.

(Continued on page 8)



Will You Let Me PROVE I Can Make YOU a *New Man?*


LET ME START SHOWING YOU RESULTS LIKE THESE
5 inches of new Muscle
"My arms increased 1½", chest 2½", forearm ⅞"."—C. S., W. Va.
What a difference!
"Have put 3½" on chest (normal) and 2½" expanded."—F. S., N. Y.
Here's what ATLAS did for ME!
John Jacobs BEFORE
John Jacobs AFTER
For quick results I recommend CHARLES ATLAS
"Am sending snapshot showing wonderful progress."—W. G., N. J.
GAINED 29 POUNDS
"When I started, weighed only 141. Now 170."—T. K., N. Y.

Here's What Only 15 Minutes a Day Can Do For You

I DON'T care how old or young you are, or how ashamed of your present physical condition you may be. If you can simply raise your arm and flex it I can add SOLID MUSCLE to your biceps—yes, on each arm—in double-quick time! Only 15 minutes a day—right in your own home—is all the time I ask of you! And there's no cost if I fail.

I can broaden your shoulders, strengthen your back, develop your whole muscular system INSIDE and OUTSIDE! I can add inches to your chest, give you a vise-like grip, make those legs of yours lithe and powerful. I can shoot new strength into your old backbone, exercise those inner organs, help you cram your body so full of pep, vigor and red-blooded vitality that you won't feel there's even "standing room" left for weakness and that lazy feeling! Before I get through with you I'll have your whole frame "measured" to a nice, new, beautiful suit of muscle!

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"Dynamic Tension!" That's the ticket! The identical natural method that I myself developed to change my body from the scrawny, skinny-chested weakling I was at 17 to my present super-man physique! Thousands of other fellows are becoming marvelous physical specimens—my way. I give you no gadgets or contraptions to fool with. When you have learned to develop your Strength through *"Dynamic Tension"* you can laugh at artificial muscle-makers. You simply utilize the DORMANT muscle-power in your own God-given body—watch it increase and multiply double-quick into real solid LIVE MUSCLE.

My method—*"Dynamic Tension"*—will turn the trick for you. No theory—every exercise is practical. And, man, so easy! Spend only 15 minutes a day in your own home. From the very start you'll be using my method of *"Dynamic Tension"* almost unconsciously every minute of the day—walking, bending over, etc.—to BUILD MUSCLE and VITALITY.

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In it I talk to you in straight-from-the-shoulder language. Packed with inspirational pictures of myself and pupils—fellows who became NEW MEN in strength, my way. Let me show you what I helped THEM do. See what I can do for YOU! For a real thrill, send for this book today. AT ONCE. CHARLES ATLAS, Dept. 83S, 115 East 23rd St., New York City.

CHARLES ATLAS

Awarded the title of "The World's Most Perfectly Developed Man" in international contest—in competition with ALL men who would consent to appear against him.

This is a recent photo of Charles Atlas showing how he looks today. This is not a studio picture but an actual untouched snapshot.

CHARLES ATLAS, Dept. 83S
115 East 23rd St., New York, N. Y.

I want the proof that your system of *"Dynamic Tension"* will help make a New Man of me—give me a healthy, husky body and big muscular development. Send me your free book, "Everlasting Health and Strength."

Name.....
(Please print or write plainly)

Address.....

City..... State.....

(Continued from page 6)

I would like to hear from my good friend, Donald Butts, whom I haven't heard from in eight years. I last saw him in Wiggins, Miss., and have since heard that he went to a job in Texas. J. W. (Jim) Bryars, 2006 St. Stephens Rd., Mobile, Ala.

I would like to establish contact with two of my best friends of a few years back. Since I joined the army and came to Panama I have lost track of them. They both lived in Harlan County, Kentucky. One of them is Bradley Cox, about 20 years old. The other is Hiram Thomas, nicknamed "Sappo." Hiram, if you or Brad read this, be sure and write me. Pvt. Victor R. Hubbard, c/o *Adventure.*

George Henry Johnston, last heard of at Ewart, Man., Canada, in 1919. Age about 67, born in Renfrew, Ont. Any information as to his whereabouts will be greatly appreciated by his son, George Thomas Johnston, Box 95, Dunnville, Ont., Canada.

Guy L. Curley, formerly of Hickory, N. C.: I was in Asheville, Morgantown, N. C., and Danville, Va., with you about 1924. You were going to West Virginia. Write your friend, S. T. Bryant, 205 W. Grace St., Richmond, Va.

Nat Williams (generally known as "Old Kentuck" while in the service), P. O. Box No. 276, Veterans Home, Napa Co., Calif., would like to hear from John W. Williams, (called "The Psalm Singer" by his intimates), and Harry C. Morris (a railroad man), both of whom served in Co. "H" of the 50th Iowa Vol. Infantry in 1898. Also Charles A. Moore, and Sgt. Joseph C. (Dago) Watkins, both of whom served in Co. "I" of the same regiment at the same time.

Cpl. Vernts or Verntz, Co. E, 1st U. S. Engnrs., wounded in the battle of Ste. Mihiel. I have a photo taken of you at the time. You may have it if you wish. . . . During the last unpleasantness I was a 1st Lieut. of Inf. attached to the 1st U. S. Engnrs. and in my official capacity carried and used a small camera. During the battle of Ste. Mihiel, in the neighborhood of Mont Sec, I think, I took a picture of a wounded American soldier surrounded by German prisoners. The kodak being of the "autographic" type, I noted on the film "Cpl. Vernts (z)". In clearing out an old trunk recently, I came across a print of the above and vaguely remember that at the time I took the photo I promised the wounded man a copy of the picture, if it turned out well. In the excitement of battle, and afterward I forgot all about sending him a print. Apparently, he was a member of Co. E. 1st Engrs. or he might have been of some infantry outfit. H. S. Bonney, 1537 Euterpe St., New Orleans, La.

My brother, William Ray Harvey, 52 years old. Was a private in Battery E, 348th Field Artillery, 91st Division, A.E.F. Reported dead in France in 1918. Was supposed to have been seen alive at Mountain View, Wyoming, March, 1940. Also, want information of William Harvey. Private in Co. G., 314th Infantry, 78th Division, A.E.F., 1918. Any information about these men will be greatly appreciated by George E. Harvey, 304—9th Avenue North, Nampa, Idaho.

John E. Vittitoe, last heard from around Pactola and Rapid City, S. Dak. If you see this, John, write me. Any information will be appreciated by C. R. Boone, R. 4, Box 135, Albuquerque, New Mexico.

My mother, born Mary Herrin in Island Pond, Me., married my father, William Foster, and they lived for several years in Bangor. I was the youngest of six children. When I was about two years old, my father, who was freight conductor for the M.C.R.R., was accidentally killed. That was about 1887. Soon after, my mother married Charles Leonard, a ship's steward, and went to Mass. I am now 56, and have tried for many years to locate their possible children. If any are living, or if any reader can give me any information about them, please write James Garfield Foster, c/o The Billboard Pub. Co., Cincinnati, Ohio.

Anyone knowing the whereabouts of Amos Leslie Ingersoll who was last heard of in Minnesota about 1917, please get in touch with Ellard L. Long, Newell, S. Dak.

Information wanted about Caleb Hughes, age 47, World War veteran. He left home in Texas in 1921 and wrote brother in 1925 from some town in N. Y. and from Chester, Pa. According to War Department, he had been in Wilmington, Del., during 1929-30. He only went to fourth grade in school and had always worked on farm or ranch or done common labor. His mother is now deceased. Please communicate with Robert E. Mahaffey, Box 684, Oklahoma City, Okla.

Showing the wide assortment in the $2.98 'oodle box'

The oodle box

—the perfect year 'round gift for men in service!

$2.98 'oodle box' *contains:*

Woodbury's Shave Cream, large; 4 Pal razor blades, hollow ground; styptic pencil; Squibb Dental Cream; Faultless Nylon toothbrush; Jergen's soap; XBA Foot & Body powder, large; Westphal's Hair Tonic, large; pocket comb; White & Wyckoff stationery; Blitz polishing cloth; Griffin shoe polish, large; shoe cloth; Beaded Tip shoe laces; Pull EZ mending kit; three magazines—Adventure, Big Book Detective, Big Book Western.

***regular retail value* over $3.00**

$4.98 'oodle box' *contains:*

Squibb Shave Cream, large; 8 Pal razor blades, hollow ground; Woodbury shave lotion, large; styptic pencil; Faultless Nylon toothbrush; Squibb Dental Cream; Jergen's soap; XBA Foot & Body powder, large; Westphal's Hair Tonic, large; pocket comb; LaCross nail file; 1 lb. Charms, hard candy; Service Man's Creed; White & Wyckoff stationery; Eagle lead pencil; copy Reader's Digest; adhesive bandages; Blitz polishing cloth; Griffin shoe polish, large; Beaded Tip shoe laces; Pull EZ mending mending kit; packet of cartoon postcards; steel mirror.

***regular retail value* over $5.00**

To cover packing, insurance, prepaid shipment and all Federal taxes, add 60c to above prices. For points on Pacific Coast or overseas, add 75c.

Contents of boxes previously packed, in distribution and a few in stock, vary slightly from above lists. Equivalent retail value guaranteed.

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Jim Burkett shot out the light just as Howdy Furnell sent the big poker table crashing over.

ROUND-UP AT SUN PRAIRIE

By WALT COBURN

FIVE big round-up outfits were camped within a few miles of one another on the wide flat strip of cow country called Sun Prairie, Montana. Each outfit had its own mess wagon and bed wagon, its own remuda of saddle horses, its horse wrangler and nighthawk, cook and crew of cowhands. Each round-up crew consisted of about twenty-five men who took orders from a wagon boss. If ever a ruckus started, and there was some betting going on

ILLUSTRATED BY DON HEWITT

that there would be a gun ruckus before the range was worked, it would really be one for the cow history book.

Sheriff Ike Niber had made the rounds this evening when the wagons pulled in on camp grounds after a wagon race for the best camp sites. Old Ike was playing no favorites and he took Jim Burkett, the new stock inspector, along with him.

Humpy Jack Davis, driving the four fastest light work horses in the Circle C remuda, had kicked off his brake and shotgunned the long hill and beaten the other wagons in by a mile to camp on the best feed and water along Beaver Creek. The Circle C cook had turned over the mess wagon and spilled grub from hell to breakfast. Other wagons had rough-locked their wheels to come down the long hill. The Circle C cowpunchers weren't getting much of a supper but the little hunchbacked redheaded nighthawk had won them money and was the hero of the day. Humpy had made good his brag that he could drive his four-horse team anywhere a man could ride a horse and drag a rope. And he was the best nighthawk in the cow country. Regardless of black nights and stormy weather Humpy Jack would fetch in the remuda at daybreak without a lost horse.

"We'd orter have a son of a ——— in the sack for supper," said Sheriff Ike Niber, "to celebrate."

A son of a ——— in the sack is a suet pudding cooked in a sack to steam it. It is the cowboy's favorite dessert.

Humpy Jack grinned mirthlessly and pointed to a big man on a long-legged bay horse who was riding up out of the sunset.

"Looks like we're havin' a son of a ——— for supper, Ike."

Sheriff Ike Niber's puckered blue eyes twinkled and the straight-lipped mouth partly hidden under his drooping white mustache pulled in a slow grin.

"I don't reckon," he said to the hawk-beaked, redheaded, hunchback nighthawk, "that Logan Jones has got a friend in Montana. . . . Ornery Jones. Ornery Logan Jones. Don't start no ruckus with the feller, Humpy."

"This ain't my outfit. I'm just night-

hawkin' for the Circle C. If I was runnnin' the wagon, I'd not let Ornery Jones within rifle range. Good thing he's a-comin' up against the wind. The remuda git a whiff of his stinkin' hide and they'd stampede. Them Cross J steers never put on taller, Ike. Because when Ornery Jones goes on guard of a night the beef herd quits the bedground and mills all night long. Knocks the taller off them big ol' beef steers—"

Sheriff Ike Niber grinned and walked away. Humpy Jack chuckled.

LOGAN JONES was a big, rawboned, leathery man with a pair of hard gray eyes and a perpetual scowl that pulled his shaggy sandy brows into a crooked line above his big nose. He was perhaps fifty years old and had built his Cross J outfit into a big sized spread.

He had ridden over from where his round-up had gotten fifth place for a camp ground on Killed Woman Creek at the edge of the Larb Hills. He sat his saddle like he was in an even uglier humor than usual. He was a hard loser and his pride had been hurt by his wagons getting the sorriest camp ground.

"Shore thing, cowhands," Humpy Jack's voice was loud enough for the visiting cowman to overhear, "we're havin' a son of a ——— for supper!"

Ornery Logan Jones ignored the rough laughter. He rode up to where Sheriff Ike Niber stood near the rope corral with Stock Inspector Jim Burkett.

"How many deputies you fetch from Chinook, Sheriff?" Logan Jones had a harsh, rasping voice.

"Nary a one, Logan. Me'n Jim Burkett's enough to inspect that big herd these five outfits will be gatherin' tomorrow."

"Supposin' it ain't cattle but gun totin' cowhands that needs the law to ride herd on 'em?"

"I'm warnin' all of 'em, Logan, to leave their guns in their beds when they roll outa the blankets in the early mornin'. I'll be on hand when your wagon bosses scatter their circle riders at daybreak. Me'n Jim Burkett will be there when you fellers work the big herd. Nobody needs a six-shooter or saddle gun to work cattle. That goes for you as well as the others, Logan. Tell your wagon boss."

"I done give Howdy Furnell his orders," snapped Logan Jones. "Mebbyso his damn cook and nighthawk was slow about gittin' onto a good camp ground. But there ain't no better wagon boss in the country than Howdy Furnell of the Cross J." He turned his hard gray eyes on the new stock inspector.

"Ride over to the Cross J camp this evenin'. I got somethin' to talk over with you, Burkett."

Ornery Logan Jones rode off. Sheriff Ike Niber tugged at his drooping white mustache. His puckered blue eyes cut a quick searching look at Jim Burkett.

The new stock inspector was on the younger side of thirty. Stocky built, he looked shorter than his actual five feet eight. His tanned face had reddened, then gone a little white. Logan Jones had talked to him like he was giving orders to some nigger hired man.

"Mostly," Sheriff Ike Niber's lazy Texan drawl sounded, "nobody that knows Ornery Logan Jones pays no never minds to his ways. He must just nacherally been born into this world a-hatin' it."

"It beats me," put in Humpy Jack, "how a man like Howdy Furnell kin stand to work for Jones. Howdy's a rattlin' good wagon boss and a good feller, drunk or sober. Mebbyso Ornery Jones does pay him twice what ary other ramrod in the country gits. But if I was Howdy, I wouldn't hire out to the Cross J for railroad presidents' wages and bankers' hours. Takin' Logan Jones's cussin'. Puttin' up with them three Sykes cousins of Logan Jones's. Them three Sykes boys a-doin' Ornery Jones's dirty work, hopin' that some night they'll git drunk enough on rot-gut booze to git up enough nerve to bushwhack their big ornery cousin and fall heir to the Cross J. . . . Till you've met the Sykes reps, Sam, Tate and Mel, you've never smelt skunk stink before, Burkett."

The color was coming back into Jim Burkett's square-jawed, blunt-nosed face. The hard glitter left his green eyes. He grinned faintly at the waspish nighthawk.

Sheriff Ike Niber

"I've met two of the Sykes brothers," he said grimly.

"Meet one and you've met the three of 'em," grinned Humpy Jack. "Long-geared, lantern-jawed, green-eyed things with a whine in their voice like a raw wind. Triplets. Their mother died when they was just past the weanin' age. The pore woman just couldn't stand the looks of what she'd give birth to. One woulda been enough to make the pore woman want to cut her throat with a dull, rusty knife. But the three of 'em was just too much for the pore thing to stand. She died a-smilin'. Leavin' 'em for her brother Sam to raise was the only way that pore, pitiful woman had of gittin' square with Ornery Logan Jones for all the misery he'd dealt her. Includin' the marryin' off of her when she was sixteen to that Horse Thief Sykes.

"Logan Jones claims that Horse Thief Sykes got drowned a-crossin' some stolen horses one night when the Missouri River was on the rampage. But Sykes was a river rat when it come to workin' in water. Best swimmer along the Missouri. But even a river man like Horse Thief Sykes can't swim good with a belly full of 30-30 slugs. Nobody ever found his drowned body."

BECAUSE Logan Jones always sent the three Sykes cowboys to represent his Cross J iron with other round-up outfits, the cow country called the three brothers the Sykes reps.

Every cow outfit in the country knew them and their crooked and trouble-making ways. Wagon bosses groaned and cussed when one of the Sykes brothers rode up with a string of Cross J horses to work with the round-up.

Oklahoma Jake, wagon boss for the Circle C, refused to let the Sykes reps work with his wagon. Other cow outfits were beginning to feel the same way about Sam, Tate and Mel Sykes.

Alone, any one of the Sykes reps was a coward. But when they were together and half drunk, they liked to gang up on some man they had it in for, crowd the luckless man into a fight, then gun whip him and kick him when he went down beneath their clubbing six-shooter barrels.

Humpy Jack told Sheriff Ike Niber that the law should put a bounty on the three Sykes reps. Winter-times, Humpy Jack ran a big pack of hounds for the Circle C and made good money collecting the bounty on coyotes and wolves his hounds caught. He said he was training his hound pack to string out the Sykes reps and pull 'em down. Oklahoma Jake grinned and said that Humpy Jack wasn't more than half joshing, at that.

The Sykes reps had tried to gang up on the hunchback once. Humpy had the long legs and arms of a six footer. It was his short humped back that took down his height and made him look dwarfish when he sat a horse. Humpy had whipped the three Sykes reps. He would have killed them with his strong, hairy hands if Sheriff Ike Niber and Oklahoma Jake had not pulled him off the three whining, slobbering, battered brothers as they lay in the yellow dust of Chinook's main street.

That was one reason Ornery Logan Jones left Humpy Jack strictly alone. Humpy was forever trying to goad the big cowman into a fight.

Right now Sheriff Ike Niber heaved a sigh of relief as the big ornery owner of

the Cross J outfit rode away from the Circle C round-up camp.

"Whoever kills that big son," Humpy Jack nodded towards the departing cowman, "should be made Governor of Montana. Somebody should pass the hat around every cow camp in the country and collect a reward that would put Ornery Logan Jones's killer on easy street for the rest of his life. If ever I kill Logan Jones, you'll find me passin' my hat around, Ike."

"I'll remember that, Humpy," grinned the tall old sheriff.

Stock Inspector Jim Burkett got on his horse and rode off. Headed for the Cross J round-up camp on Killed Woman Creek.

"Quiet sort of a cuss, ain't he, Ike? I'd hate for to git him mad at me. Them quiet fellers is the worst, once they actually git a horn drooped. No paw and beller to a feller like that. He just charges. And his horns hook deep."

Oklahoma Jake asked the sheriff where Jim Burkett came from and who got him the stock inspector job. Old Ike said he didn't know a thing about the new stock inspector. Or where he come from.

The sheriff said he was riding over to the Bear Paw Pool wagon. Then on to the Square and Circle Diamond outfits. He might get over to the Cross J camp and he might not. Likely he'd stay at the Circle Diamond wagon tonight.

"Just in case you need to locate me," he said, and rode away.

THINGS were quiet enough that first night. And when the crews from the different outfits gathered on a high point an hour before daybreak to start on circle, there was no indication of anybody wanting to start a ruckus.

Oklahoma Jake from the Circle C, Tom McDonald from the Bear Paw Pool, Bill Jaycox from the Square, Johnny Survant from the Circle Diamond wagon, Howdy Furnell from the Cross J. All there in the black hour before dawn, with their cowpunchers. A good sprinkling of reps from smaller outfits. Joe Reynolds said his Long X outfit would throw in with them that day. All friendly enough for that chilly starlight hour of three in the morning when no man's temper is at its best.

Sheriff Ike Niber had told every wagon boss how he felt about them packing guns. And so far as he could tell, saddle guns had been left back at the bed wagons and six-shooters put away in warsacks and bedrolls.

Ornery Logan Jones was not among the early morning circle riders. Howdy Furnell said that the Cross J owner wasn't riding circle. But that he'd be at the hold-up grounds when the drives came drifting in from the hills for the big Sun Prairie gatherment.

Jim Burkett had spent last night at the Cross J wagon. The new stock inspector was forking a Cross J horse. Sheriff Ike Niber was riding a Circle C gelding. The sheriff and stock inspector would mount themselves on horses borrowed from whatever outfit they stayed with.

While the wagon bosses gathered in a little group to plan out the morning's circle, cowpunchers collected and paid bets on the big wagon race yesterday for the best camp grounds. There was good-natured joshing and hoorawing.

One of the Circle C cowpunchers told the three Sykes brothers that he was collecting all bets for Humpy Jack who had bet heavily on himself to win the race with his bed wagon and four horses.

"Tell that humpbacked son," said Tate Sykes, "to do his own bet collectin'. Us boys ain't payin' nobody but the man that made the bet."

"Would that be fight talk the Sykes reps is makin'," asked the Circle C cowboy, "or are you just plannin' to back down on the bet you lost because the Cross J wagons come down off the slant with brake shoes set hard and fast and the wheels rough-locked?"

"Humpy Jack," said the bronk peeler who rode the rough string for the Bear Paw Pool, "throwed his lines away a-comin' off the high bench, and drove them four horses of his with his whip."

"Two bronks on the wheel," put in a Circle Diamond man, "and quarter horses a-looking through the lead collars. It cost me a month's pay but it was worth it."

"Oklahoma Jake," said a top hand from the Milner Square wagon, "wanted to bet outfit agin outfit with Ornery Jones that Humpy Jack would be the first man to git there, even if he hadn't nothin' left of that bed wagon but the runnin' gears. Ornery Jones wasn't takin' no part of Jake's bet. Jake's collectin' enough new Jawn Bay Stetsons from them wagon bosses yonder to open up a hat store. The Square cook broke a laig when he rolled his mess wagon over. Otherwise—"

"The grub spoiler fer the Milner Square," joshed a Long X man, "couldn't drive them four horses of his to water."

Jim Burkett had ridden in between the three Sykes brothers and the Circle C man. He asked Tate Sykes for the loan of a match. When the match was handed him, the new stock inspector pulled the match head across the butt of a holstered six-shooter and lit his brown paper cigarette.

It was the sort of a gesture that any cowpuncher could understand. Old Sheriff Ike Niber grinned faintly to himself as the three Sykes reps reined their horses out of the argument that was batted back and forth good-naturedly by the cowpunchers from the five outfits.

"All right," said Oklahoma Jake, "let's rattle our hocks. You Circle C men is follerin' me on the outside circle. Seems like these here other outfits is afoot for circle horses this mornin'."

That was just hoorawing. Oklahoma Jake had drawn straws with the other wagon bosses to see who would take the outside and longest circle back into the hills. He had drawn the long straw and lost.

He rode off into the dim starlight at a long lope, whistling tunelessly through grinning white teeth. His men followed a little grimly. When Oklahoma Jake led a long circle a man was lucky if he didn't get back to camp on a played-out horse.

Other wagon bosses and their men pulled out according to the rotation designated by the length of the straw they had drawn. They were riding their top horses. The ridge runners they used for long, hard circles.

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THIS was much more than the average one wagon round-up. It was a contest. Horses and men matched in a gruelling race that called for the speed and endurance of cow horses. The savvy of cowpunchers.

Sheriff Ike Niber and Stock Inspector Jim Burkett sat their horses on the high point and watched more than a hundred cowboys scatter into different groups and ride off into the first gray of paling starlight.

It was something to watch. Something for a cowhand to tally in his book of memories and talk about in the years to come. This was one of the biggest round-ups in the history of Montana. And behind it lay a grim purpose.

Disputed range boundaries. The ownership of unbranded mavericks. The questioned honesty of ramrods who owned or were hired to run the round-up wagons that represented big brands in Montana's cattle industry. Disputes were to be settled. Cattle in various brands tallied in the work that would come later, when these circle riders brought in the drives. The Stock Growers Association was behind this big five outfit round-up. Its twofold purpose was to settle for all time the argument that the cow country could be worked on a wholesale basis. Five outfits and more than a hundred men. That was one purpose of this five outfit round-up. The second purpose was to see which outfit tallied the most cattle on any certain strip of range that was being worked and jointly claimed by all the five outfits.

"It'll be the biggest gatherment of cattle you and me ever seen," the grizzled sheriff told the young stock inspector. "A herd that you couldn't shoot acrost with a 30-30 and the hind sight raised to the last notch. There'll never be another big round-up like it. Because it's my gamble that the barb wire is goin' to fence up the free range. So git a big look at 'er from start to finish. It'll be a million dollar gatherment. And there just might be a gun ruckus before she's over that'll make the Battle of Gettysburg look like the Sunday meetin' of old maid schoolmarms."

"You look for trouble, Sheriff?" asked the new stock inspector.

Sheriff Ike Niber looked straight at Stock Inspector Jim Burkett in the gray dawn.

"Your guess might be better than mine. It was you, not me, that stayed last night at the Cross J wagon."

Jim Burkett's mouth tightened and the color of his tanned face was, it seemed to the grizzled sheriff, almost as gray as the sky. The new stock inspector started to say something, then seemed to get a quick thought that changed his mind.

"Me'n you," the sheriff's slow drawl broke the uncomfortable silence between the two men, "ain't a-ridin' no long circle. Our job don't rightly commence till the drives come in on the hold-up ground. We might as well ride on to camp."

"Which camp, Sheriff?" Stock Inspector Jim Burkett's voice was flat-toned. Uneasiness showed in the glint of his eyes.

"Well," drawled Sheriff Ike Niber, "let's see. There's town aigs at the Milner Square wagon. . . . The Bear Paw Pool is feedin' raisin pie. . . . The Circle Diamond butchered last night and the grub spoiler promised me a bait of marrowguts. . . . The Circle C cook busted his sourdough keg when he turned over his chuck wagon so there ain't no sourdough bread or flapjacks. . . . How's about us ridin' on down to the Cross J camp and tacklin' somethin' like a steak that's cooked just enough to take the kick and beller out of it?"

Jim Burkett nodded slowly. "All right, Sheriff. You're the boss."

CHAPTER II

FROM HELL TO BREAKFAST

THE Cross J spread was the only cattle outfit in the country that carried a keg of whiskey in the mess wagon. The keg had a brass spigot that locked and opened with a key. Logan Jones carried the key. Sometimes he would give Howdy Furnell a drink. On a few rare and far between occasions he had been

known to pass out drinks to all the men in the outfit. But for the most part it was strictly a one man keg and Logan Jones was the one man. Never really drunk, never cold sober, Ornery Jones was a quart-a-day man who drank alone.

He was drinking strong black coffee and whiskey mixed half and half in a big tin cup. His bloodshot cold gray eyes stared at the sheriff and stock inspector without making them welcome. He gave a low sort of growling grunt when he saw the sheriff staring at the cartridge belt and holstered six-shooter buckled around his flanks.

"I've packed this gun for a lot of years, Niber. I ain't takin' 'er off fer no damn man."

"You act," Sheriff Ike Niber told the cowman, "like you'd been caught doin' somethin' you was ashamed of."

Logan Jones had been sitting on the tongue of the bed wagon. The nighthawk had spread his tarp and blankets under the wagon and was snoring with the tarp pulled over his head. There was no sign of the cook but smoke rose from the stovepipe that showed through an iron brace fixed in the mess tent's ridgepole.

Ike Niber heard Logan Jones growl something as the sheriff stepped off his horse and walked into the big mess tent. Ike said he reckoned he could do with a cup of coffee.

The round-up cook was a big black Negro. He was sitting on his rolled bed wiping blood from his badly battered face. He rolled his eyes at the law officer until the whites showed and kept wiping at his nose and mouth with a greasy old towel.

"Ah nevah th'owed no wagon race, Mistah Ike. And Ah nevah stole ary drop of the boss-man's likka. Them chuck wagon mules jes' wa'n't feelin' lak runnin'. What I been a-workin' on is a li'l ol' dram of lemon extrac' Ah had hid out in mah bed."

Sheriff Ike Niber found a clean tin cup and filled it with strong black coffee.

"What was it Logan Jones used to work you over with, Nigger Joe?"

"Corral staub, mebby. Mighta been a tent stake. Could be a wagon spoke or a smoke-pole. I was cotchin' me fo'ty winks afore I tackled 'em breakfast dishes when Ah comes awake a-dreamin' a brick house done fell on me. . . . Don' make no fuss about it, Mistah Ike. Let bygones stay bygones. Iffen 'at boss-man fire me, Ah gotta walk plumb to town. Neahest town is Malta. Fo'ty miles. Fifty miles. Mah feet jes' won' stand 'at ol' journey. Jus' don' say nothin' to nobody, Mistah Ike."

"If you was to slip a bait of strychnine in Logan Jones's grub," said the sheriff as the big rawboned owner of the Cross J came into the tent, "nobody would call it anything but self-defense."

Ike's blue eyes were hard and bright now in the early morning sunlight. He stared at Logan Jones with more contempt than hatred.

"Unless you git hung, Logan, somebody is goin' to really pay you off one of these times."

"That's been tried," sneered the cowman. "This is my outfit. I run it like I damn please. If you don't like it, ride on to one of them cow camps where you're welcome."

"That'll be a pleasure," drawled Ike. "But before I pull out, I'm givin' you some advice. You pull that gun of yours now or out yonder at the herd and I'll make you eat it. There's nothin' or nobody a-holdin' you right now if you feel lucky enough to fill your hand."

Ornery Logan Jones glared at the tall, homely, easy-talking sheriff. There was a faint grin on Ike's leathery face but his puckered blue eyes held the big cowman with their dangerous challenge.

"I ain't gun fightin' no law officer," he growled and turned away.

IKE NIBER took his time about quitting the Cross J round-up camp. Logan Jones kept watching the skyline and it seemed to the sheriff that the stock inspector was uneasy. Ike had just mounted his horse when he saw three riders coming from the edge of the Larb Hills. That was the direction Logan Jones had been watching.

"That rides like the Sykes reps," Ike said bluntly. "If it is, they're ridin' a mighty short circle. Your orders, Logan?"

"I wasn't leadin' no circle," snapped the cowman. "I hire a wagon boss to do that."

Ike grinned faintly and turned to the stock inspector. "The three Sykes brothers have a outfit over in the Larb Hills. Howdy Furnell and his Cross J men had orders from me to git a clean work on them Hills. It's rough country and full of strays. Another month and there'd be a lot of big unbranded calves ready to wean. This is one round-up that's goin' to git a clean work on the Larb Hills and the Sykes range, regardless. Let's git goin'."

Ike motioned to Jim Burkett and rode off at a lope. A mile from camp they halted the three Sykes brothers.

"How come," Ike asked them, "you're headed for camp?"

They exchanged furtive, shifting glances. They had no excuse that would hold water. Ike Niber was a cowman and had run the Circle C and other wagons. There was no use in trying to lie to him.

Ike was riding a big Circle C gelding. "Foller me, misters. I'm leadin' you on a circle you'll remember." He cut a quick look at the new stock inspector. "Are you takin' orders from Logan Jones?"

Jim Burkett's jaws were clamped until the muscles ridged. He stared hard at the three Sykes reps. Then grinned mirthlessly at Ike Niber.

"Logan Jones figgered I was. But he's wrong. Let's git the job done, Sheriff. Ride in the lead, you three wart hawgs. Me'n Ike ain't gittin' shot where our galluses cross."

The three Sykes reps leered uncertainly. Hidden guns bulged under their flannel shirts.

"Take us first," Jim Burkett told them flatly, "to the box canyon trap. Empty it. Drop so much as one wind-bellied dogie and I'll jail the three of you for cattle rustlin'. Ride them Cross J geldin's like you owned 'em."

They headed into the Larb Hills. The three Sykes reps rode in the lead. Now and then one or another of them would look, coyote-like, back across his shoulder.

"I bet a new hat," grinned Sheriff Ike Niber, "that back yonder at the Cross J wagon, that last drink Ornery Logan Jones taken is shore sourin' inside his belly."

Stock Inspector Jim Burkett smiled grimly and made no answer. There was a worried look in his eyes.

All the other drives were bunched together in one huge round-up on Sun Prairie when Sheriff Ike Niber and the new stock inspector and the three Sykes reps came out of the Larb Hills with a big drive of cattle. Steers, a few bulls, a lot of cows with big unbranded calves. There were also a dozen or more unbranded mavericks. The cattle were mostly in irons that did not belong to Logan Jones or the Sykes reps. Stray cattle in a dozen or more brands.

That round-up on Sun Prairie was the biggest that any man there had ever seen. They were telling one another that there should be a man there with a machine to get a picture of it. They saw Ike fetching in that big drive from the Larb Hills and Oklahoma Jake grinned.

"Looks like Ike just couldn't keep his hand out."

Howdy Furnell and Logan Jones sat their horses apart from the others. They looked like they were having some sort of a violent quarrel. As Ike and Jim Burkett and the three Sykes reps drifted their cattle into the huge hold-up, Ornery Logan Jones said something to his tall wagon boss and made a move towards his gun.

Nearly every wagon boss and cowpuncher saw at least a part of what happened.

Logan Jones jerked his six-shooter. Howdy Furnell had his coiled saddle rope in his hand. He jumped his horse into Jones' mount. The coiled hard-twist manila rope struck the ornery cowman across the face. Howdy grabbed Jones's gun by its long barrel, yanked and twisted, jerked it free just as Jones managed to thumb back the gun hammer and pull the trigger.

The bullet cut a thin furrow along Howdy Furnell's ribs. The Cross J wagon boss jerked the man who paid him fighting wages. He pulled Logan Jones out of his saddle and went to the ground with him.

Howdy's long arms whipped looping blows that thudded into Ornery Logan Jones's face.

The sound of the shot had spooked the cattle and some of the cowpunchers were kept busy for the next few minutes. They kept looking over their shoulders at the fight as they rode around the milling cattle.

Howdy Furnell was tall and lean-muscled. He was fast and quick. And he had youthful years on his side.

Ornery Logan Jones out-weighed his wagon boss fifty pounds. He was big-boned and tough and knew every dirty trick of rough and tumble fighting. But whiskey had shortened his wind and he was twenty years older than his Texan wagon boss.

IT WAS youth and strong wind and speed that began to tell as the fight lasted. Howdy Furnell could sidestep and duck out from under Logan Jones's heavy rushes. Howdy's long arms whipped looping blows that thudded into Ornery Logan Jones's face.

Blood and sweat and dirt. The two men fought savagely. Logan Jones was badly winded. Howdy kept stepping and dancing out of reach.

"Stand and fight, yuh yaller ———!" panted Logan Jones. "Tate! Sam! Mel! You damn worthless snakes! Grab 'im!"

"The Sykes reps ain't grabbin' no-

body!" grinned Sheriff Ike Niber.

Cowpunchers were letting the cattle scatter and drift as they rode up and sat their horses in a big circle.

Howdy Furnell had his boss winded and weak. He began landing where and how and when he pleased. Every time he hit Logan Jones the sound of his fist smacked like hands clapping. Blood spurted. Ornery Logan Jones was beaten to his knees. He rolled over on his face and belly and lay there, sobbing and beaten to a pulp.

Howdy Furnell's face was badly battered and his gray flannel shirt was sodden with blood from his bullet-nicked ribs.

Oklahoma Jake told him to get on his horse and ride on over to the Circle C wagon. The wagon bosses were splitting their crews in two, sending half their men to camp to change horses and eat, while the others held the big herd they were now gathering once more.

The three Sykes reps got Logan Jones on his horse and handed him his six-shooter that had lain there on the ground during the fight.

"I'll kill you for this, Furnell!" the beaten cowman slobbered. "I'll git yuh when the sign is right! No man kin do this to me and live to brag about it!"

"Whenever you feel lucky," Howdy Furnell told him.

Sheriff Ike Niber told the new stock inspector to stay with the herd. He rode on towards the Circle C wagon with Howdy Furnell.

"Whatever it is, Howdy, that Logan Jones has been holdin' over your head like a gun the past few years, he's likely to bear down on hard. I don't want to know a damn thing about it. Keep your mouth shut. You know the way outa the country. I don't reckon Oklahoma Jake would miss a Circle C ridge runner if you was to saddle one and ride off. I'm goin' back to the herd. I just can't stand to hear Humpy Jack cuss when that humpbacked nighthawk wakes up and finds out what a show he missed."

Ike reined his horse around and rode back to the herd. He grinned slowly, his puckered blue eyes twinkling.

He told Bill Jaycox to fetch him out a good cutting horse and some cold meat and bread from the Milner Square wagon. That he wasn't going to camp for dinner. And for Johnny Survant to fetch Jim Burkett a Circle Diamond cow horse and cold grub. That the law was staying out at the herd.

If any wagon boss or cowpuncher had it figured that Ornery Logan Jones was aiming to have Howdy arrested on some charge that dated back to the tall Texan's past, they kept their ideas to themselves.

"Ike Niber," said Oklahoma Jake to Tom McDonald, the Bear Paw Pool wagon boss, "is a white man."

Tom nodded and Jake rode over to the Pool wagon for dinner and a fresh horse.

Howdy Furnell did not come back out to the big herd. But Humpy Jack, the nighthawk, rode out with the Circle C cowpunchers. He was still cussing because he had missed seeing Ornery Logan Jones get really whipped.

"But you boys ain't seen nothin' yet. If them three Sykes reps tries to back outa payin' that wagon race bet, you're gonna be watchin' a three-ring circus."

Humpy Jack grinned and patted the long braided bullwhip he used at night to fetch back straying horses to his remuda. The long bullwhip had a wide buckskin popper that could crack like a gun. He could flick a cigarette out of a man's mouth with the popper at the end of the twenty-foot bullwhip. Seldom did that buckskin popper or braided lash ever touch a horse. The noise of the popper did the job. But he could tear hunks of meat out of a man's hide with it. Rip the shirt off a man's back with his bullwhip.

Humpy Jack grinned as he watched the three Sykes reps ride out to the herd with the badly battered Logan Jones.

"Wait, Humpy," said Sheriff Ike Niber, "till we git the strays worked out of the herd. Don't put us short-handed."

"I kin wait till supper time. When I got to take over my cavvy. I kin wait." Humpy Jack grinned wolfishly.

Logan Jones and the three Sykes reps rode over to where Stock Inspector Jim Burkett sat his horse at the edge of the herd. Logan Jones said something to Jim Burkett. Then he and the three

Sykes reps rode on. Leaving Jim Burkett sitting his horse, his hand on his six-shooter, his eyes hard and brooding and worried as he stared after the owner of the Cross J outfit and his three big rawboned, shifty green-eyed nephews.

Sheriff Ike Niber had watched. From under the slanted brim of his hat he watched the new stock inspector and wondered what Logan Jones had said to make him look like a man who has just been told that he is doomed to die. That was the way Jim Burkett looked now. Grim and desperate and doomed.

CHAPTER III

WHEN THIEVES FALL OUT

UNDERNEATH all the hoorawing and good-natured joshing that went on back and forth between these big outfits there was an undercurrent of something else that was dangerous. Old disputes over water rights and range boundaries. Town quarrels and whiskey talk that had grown into ugly grudges between men. Owners and wagon bosses and cowpunchers who were loyal to their outfits. To say nothing of a hell slue of stray-men who came drifting out of nowhere. Some of those stray-men didn't own more than a half-dozen head of cows and half of them picked up or stolen but they were here underfoot and Ike Niber noticed that the bulk of them were forking Cross J horses and packing six-shooters.

News can spread like prairie fire in the cow country. Cowboys who rode to camp to grab a bait of grub and change horses rode back out to the herd with six-shooters shoved in the pocket of their chaps or into the waistband of their pants or overalls. A few had buckled on filled cartridge belts, wearing their six-shooters in open holsters.

Ike loped over to where Jim Burkett sat his horse. The sheriff looked grim-jawed and a little desperate.

"From where I'm a-settin'," he told the stock inspector, "I kin tally half a dozen men that's done time in the pen or has missed it by some miscarriage of justice. They're all comin' from the direction of Ornery Jones's camp and they're ridin' Cross J horses. You wouldn't know anything about how it's commenced a-rainin' stray-men?"

"You kin guess as much as I know for sure, Sheriff. They're mostly fellers that have little two-bit spreads in the Larb Hills or somewheres in the badlands along the Missouri River. Some of 'em are white men, some are 'breeds. They hole-up in the rough country, make a little whiskey, whittle on any man's beef, peddle a stolen horse here and there, and generally manage to git by. Mostly, they take orders from Logan Jones. . . . Whose notion was this big pool round-up, in the first place?"

"The big outfits. Or the Stockmen's Association. At the meetin' at Helena or Great Falls or Fort Benton or Miles City or wherever it was that the owners talked 'er over after a few odd drinks, it sounded reasonable. Right now it looks like almost anything might pop any minute. If it does, the Battle of Gettysburg was just a schoolboys' rock fight by comparison. Where do you stand, Burkett?"

"Right at your back, Ike," said the new stock inspector, "till your belly caves in." He looked and talked like he meant it.

"That ain't a-goin' to make Ornery Jones happy."

"No, it ain't. But what I just told you, Ike, goes as she lays."

"I'm obliged, pardner. We'll commence cuttin' all strays into one big cut. The big outfits won't work out their stuff till tomorrow. With this stray stuff cut out of the herd, them stray-men won't have no legal excuse for hangin' around. Me'n you'll commence a-cuttin', directly I've told Logan Jones and the Sykes reps to stay outa the herd. I'd counted on Howdy Furnell bein' on hand to help cut them stray irons."

Stock Inspector Jim Burkett took a legal-looking paper from his pocket and set fire to it with a match.

"Unless Howdy has already pulled out," he grinned faintly, "you kin send Humpy Jack back to the Circle C wagon and tell Howdy he's plenty safe so far as the law is concerned. That was a bench warrant for Howdy Furnell, dead or alive, that I just burned up. Logan Jones give it to me to serve—or else."

"You'll do to take along, Jim Burkett," said Sheriff Ike Niber. He rode off to send Humpy Jack after Howdy Furnell.

Men from various outfits were bunched clannishly. Humpy Jack was with the Circle C cowpunchers.

"Locate Howdy Furnell and tell him Jim Burkett just burned up his bench warrant, Humpy. Tell him to ride out here and help me cut Larb Hills strays. He's the one wagon boss that knows every iron, earmark and wattle."

"No law agin my comin' back with Howdy, is there, Ike?"

"Not so long as you keep from wrappin' that blacksnake around the Sykes reps' necks."

"I promised I'd wait till sundown." Humpy Jack rode off.

SHERIFF IKE NIBER motioned to Oklahoma Jake. They gathered the wagon bosses from the Bear Paw Pool, Milner Square, Circle Diamond and the Long X that had joined the other outfits.

"Whatever arguments, grudges, defugalties or difference of opinion you fellers have," Ike told them, "fergit 'em. Smoke the peace pipe. Bury the hatchet. Help me git the strays cut outa this big gatherment. Directly Howdy Furnell gits here to represent the Cross J as its wagon boss, we'll commence whittlin' on the herd. Workin' in pairs. Me'n Jim Burkett. Tom McDonald and Joe Reynolds. Johnny Survant and Bill Jaycox. Oklahoma Jake and Howdy Furnell. While your cowpunchers hold the big herd and the stray-men hold the cut."

"You're treatin' Howdy Furnell just like he was still runnin' the Cross J wagon?" asked Oklahoma Jake.

"Yep."

"Disregardin' Logan Jones?"

"Like he was sheepherder at a cowmen's gatherin'." Ike's puckered blue eyes blazed coldly.

"Ornery Jones," said Bill Jaycox, "ain't takin' that a-layin' down, Ike."

"I don't expect him to," was Ike's answer.

"He's on the prod," said Joe Reynolds of the Long X. "I rode past there. He's tapped his whiskey keg and passed the free drinks to his Cross J men and all those stray-men yonder."

"A stray-man with a bottle," volunteered Tom McDonald, "tells it that Logan Jones killed Nigger Joe because there wasn't pie for dinner."

Ike shook his head. "He found Nigger Joe asleep and whipped him over the head with a corral stake. Nigger Joe's alive. Bunged up some and too sore-footed to walk to town. But he's alive."

"Nigger Joe," said Oklahoma Jake, "is dead, Ike. He went after Logan Jones with a cleaver and Logan shot him twice in the belly. I sent the horse wrangler over to the Cross J camp after Howdy's warsack. He said Nigger Joe was plenty dead."

"The pore black son," said Sheriff Ike Niber. "Worth more to the outfit right now dead than alive."

Ike rode off. They stared after him, puzzled. Watched him ride up alone to where Ornery Logan Jones and the three Sykes reps sat their horses talking.

Sheriff Ike Niber was not a man to waste words. Or waste motions. His six-shooter was pointed at the cowman's belly and his voice was a lazy drawl.

"You killed Nigger Joe. You're under arrest. Head for the Circle C camp. If you or ary of these three snakes makes a wrong move I'll shoot you in the guts. Git goin', Logan."

"Tate there killed Nigger Joe. I didn't have a damn thing—"

"Git goin', Logan, or I'll have the pleasure of gut-shootin' you. Your luck's runnin' bad today."

Ike's voice was soft and lazy but there was a look in his eyes that chilled the cowman. That beating had taken some of the fight out of Logan Jones and not even whiskey could do much towards reviving the old fight in him. He went along with the sheriff.

"You boys got your orders," Logan Jones told the three Sykes reps as he rode away. "You let me down and I'll hang the three of yuh."

Ike let the cowman keep his six-shooter and the saddle gun he had fetched out to the herd.

"Kinda hopin', Logan," he grinned mirthlessly, "that you'll take a notion to make a fight of it."

They met Howdy Furnell on the way to the Circle C wagon. Logan Jones's hand dropped to his gun. Howdy's hand was near his six-shooter and his battered lips grinned.

"Don't claw for that smoke pole, Logan, unless you feel a lot handier than you look."

"Ride on out to the herd, Howdy," said Ike. "You and Oklahoma Jake will commence cuttin' stray stuff. Jim Burkett will tell you what to do. He's in full charge till I git back. So far as we're concerned you're still ramroddin' the Cross J outfit. Now git along. Come on, Logan. I'm turnin' you over to Humpy Jack."

Ornery Logan Jones cussed until the words choked in his corded throat. "All right, Furnell, you're ramroddin' 'er." His grin was ugly.

At the Circle C camp Sheriff Ike Niber took the prisoner's guns and turned him over to the grinning nighthawk.

"If you git sleepy, Humpy, tie Logan Jones to the wagon wheel. If he tries to git away, pick him to pieces with that blacksnake of yours. Till he hires a shyster lawyer and buys off a jury, he's charged with the murder of Nigger Joe."

Sheriff Ike Niber rode back to the herd humming into his heavy drooping mustache. He felt badly about the killing of the Negro. But it had given him the chance to put Logan Jones on ice and perhaps prevent any war out yonder. The three Sykes reps and the stray-men, half drunk and ornery as they were, would not be likely to start a gun ruckus unless Logan Jones was there to give them their orders, tell them how to do it, and back their play.

Unless something unforeseen popped up, it looked like they would get the strays worked out of the herd without any trouble. It should be simply a matter of cutting out all cattle that wore the stray brands. Brands not owned by any of the big outfits represented at the big Sun Prairie pool.

But Ike had calculated without full knowledge of the facts that concerned some of those so-called stray irons. And Howdy Furnell and Stock Inspector Jim Burkett.

THE only way to work a herd that big was to lop off a few hundred head at a time, work the strays out, throw the strays into one cut and hold the other stuff in another cut. It was hard, laborious work that required top horses and real cowhands. A raw wind that made this September morning feel like November, was blowing. There was nothing across the whole broad sweep of Sun Prairie to break the wind. Nothing but men and horses and cattle.

The Cross J cowpunchers and most of the stray-men were working on whiskey that took the chill out of their bones. But the others felt the raw bite of it and the salty sting of alkali in the dust. Wind like that tends to sharpen a man's temper. It makes cattle hard to hold and harder to work. The sun was not yet noon high and the day promised to be long and cold and tough.

Howdy Furnell was working with Oklahoma Jake cutting stray cows that

had unbranded calves. Other wagon bosses were working in pairs cutting stray cows and calves.

Stock Inspector Jim Burkett sat his horse at the edge of the herd with tally book and stubby pencil. As the pairs of riders worked a cow and calf to the edge of the herd and gave them a start, cowpunchers waiting at the herd's edge would pick up the cow and calf and start them out across the open strip towards the slowly increasing cut.

The pairs of riders doing the cutting would call out the brand on the cow and the owner of that brand if they knew the man who owned the iron.

It was a job that required cow savvy and a working knowledge of brands. Big outfits like the Circle C, Circle Diamond, Square, Long X and Bear Paw Pool had, from time to time, bought out little spreads and the brands that went with the stock. And those brands were not classed as stray irons. They were holding back those cows and calves to be branded later into the big irons.

But even as Ike Niber rode up, he saw that Stock Inspector Jim Burkett was having a little trouble.

Tom McDonald and Joe Reynolds had cut out a cow with a big unbranded calf.

"Lazy YT on the left ribs!" the Bear Paw Pool wagon boss sang out. "Don't know who owns it, mister!"

"Cut 'er back with her calf!" the new stock inspector barked. "Lazy YT belongs to Logan Jones. You'll find more of 'em. Tomorrow we'll rope one or two of them Lazy YT cows. Joe Reynolds might find his Long X brand underneath. Lazy YT is registered under the name of Dave Jones. Dave Jones is dead. Don't cut no more Lazy YT stuff for strays. They belong to the Cross J outfit."

Jim Burkett's voice was as sharp as a knife edge.

Johnny Survant and Bill Jaycox cut a cow and unbranded calf past Jim Burkett.

"Read 'er and name 'er," grinned the Circle Diamond ramrod. "Looks like a Mill Iron with a blotched O inside it."

"Cut that cow and calf back into the herd. She wore a Half Circle C once. The Circle C's cattle brand. It's worked into what the Sykes reps call Two Pole Pun'kin. Registered to Pete Sykes. Pete Sykes died when he was a baby. Me'n Ike fetched fifteen head of them Two Pole Pun'kin cows up outa the Larb Hills this mornin'. I'm impoundin' all cattle in that iron till an owner shows up. Don't cut no more of them cows into the stray bunch."

Oklahoma Jake and Howdy Furnell were cutting cows that wore the Sykes iron. Sam and Tate and Mel Sykes were with the stray-men out at the cut that held less than a hundred head of cows and calves, mostly in the Sykes S brand.

Howdy and the Circle C wagon boss rode slowly back and forth through the herd that still held a lot of cattle in half a dozen stray irons. Whenever Oklahoma Jake pointed out a cow and calf, Howdy Furnell shook his head. The Circle C man shrugged and rode out of the herd.

Ike Niber rode up to where Stock Inspector Jim Burkett was keeping his stray tallies. Burkett's tanned face looked hard and lean and grayish.

Howdy Furnell rode up on his sweat-streaked horse. There was a mirthless grin on his battered face. He and Jim Burkett stared hard at one another.

"What about ourn, Mister Stock Inspector?" asked Howdy Furnell flatly. "Cut 'em or hold 'em? Stack 'em with the Cross J stuff or deal 'em into the strays?"

"We're a-holdin' 'em, Howdy." Jim Burkett's voice was quiet.

"Then this herd is as clean as a hound's tooth. We'll lop off two-three hundred head more and whittle the strays out."

HOWDY FURNELL stopped the question Sheriff Ike Niber had been about to ask.

"Better not put ary Cross J cowpunchers on day herd or night guard, Ike. This herd with the strays the stock inspector has cut back into the bunch is goin' to be as safe to handle from now on as so much dynamite on the hoof. When them brands is inspected there's goin' to be some cowboys takin' up the trade of makin' horsehair

bridles at the Deer Lodge Pen. . . . This herd's yourn now, Ike."

Howdy Furnell rode away whistling.

"Howdy Furnell is right, Ike. It's your herd. Drift 'em off a ways. Put some Circle Diamond or Square or Long X or Pool or Circle C cowpunchers on day herd. Otherwise them cattle will drift and scatter back into the Larb Hills. And when the straight strays is cut there's goin' to be a big herd to hold tonight. A big herd and a windy night. And some cattle rustlers on the prowl."

"There's two stray brands you're holdin' back here," said Ike. "That Block K iron. And the Double Circle. A lot of cattle in 'em. You got a brand book in your pocket. Who does it give as the owners of them two brands?"

"The Larb Hills Cattle Company," said Jim Burkett. Then he looked squarely into the puckered blue eyes of Sheriff Ike Niber.

"Howdy Furnell," he said quietly, "and Jim Burkett are the Larb Hills Cattle Company."

Something in the man's tone and the look in his eyes forbade further questioning.

"When me and Howdy git right good at makin' horsehair bridles, Ike, we'll send you some. You kin raffle 'em off and send us tobacco money at the Deer Lodge pen."

Sheriff Ike Niber rode away scratching his head. There was a lot about this stray brand cutting, he told the wagon bosses who rode up to ask him just what kind of a sheepherders' picnic this was, that a sheriff didn't savvy.

"There's an old sayin', boys," he told them, "about when thieves falls out amongst themselves, the truth comes out. It's bustin' out today like a case of hives. I wisht I had a drink of likker."

They changed horses twice and worked until it was getting too dark to read the brand on a critter's hide.

Sheriff Ike Niber told the stray-men to drift the stray cut down wind and keep on a-movin'. He sent the Cross J cowpunchers to camp.

"Divide this big ol' herd into five parts and each outfit will night guard one of 'em. We're dealin' the Cross J outfit out on the night guardin'. It's up to you five outfits to hold them cattle."

There had been no time to water the cattle and graze them onto their bedgrounds. Five big herds. A raw north wind and clouds piling up in a stormy sky. Cattle with worked brands in those five herds. Like Howdy Furnell had said, those cattle were dynamite.

At the Circle C wagon Humpy Jack rubbed horse liniment on a badly beaten head and cursed himself and Ornery Logan Jones with equal vitriolic fervor. The hunchbacked nighthawk had, just before sundown, made the mistake of turning his back on his prisoner. Logan Jones had come at him from behind. Beaten him over the head with an iron tent stake. The owner of the Cross J had left Humpy Jack for dead and ridden away.

Howdy Furnell and Stock Inspector Jim Burkett had gone from the herd to the Cross J camp. Howdy reminded Sheriff Ike Niber that he was still ramrodding the Cross J outfit, regardless. Jim Burkett had gone on to camp with the Cross J wagon boss.

It looked to Ike like they were asking for trouble in big chunks because the three Sykes reps, the Cross J tough cowhands and a raft of stray-men from the Larb Hills and badlands were making the Cross J wagon their headquarters. Howdy and Jim Burkett told Ike they reckoned they could, between them, handle anything that came up. They had done it before.

They made a queer pair to figure out. For the most part they acted like they hated and distrusted one another. But they were now throwing in together against Logan Jones and his tough outfit.

Humpy Jack popped his blacksnake and cussed the coming storm. He had a bet to collect from the three Sykes reps. He had a grudge to pay off against Ornery Logan Jones. But he had a remuda of two hundred and fifty head of horses to nighthawk. The Circle C outfit wasn't paying him top wages to wrap his bullwhip around Sykes necks or tear the hide off Logan Jones in small chunks the size of four-bit pieces.

"Put 'er off till sunrise, Ike, whatever

this ruckus is you and these big dogs with the brass collars is a-cookin' up. Leave it simmer tonight because I can't turn a cavvy of horses loose to grab my bear meat. Come sunrise, I'll ride over to that Cross J camp and when you see a dust cloud headed back this way it'll be me. I'll be herdin' the Sykes things and that white-livered Ornery Jones with my whip. Every time this whip pops one of 'em will lose an ounce of weight. Till this new white buckskin popper is redder and soggier than a butcher's apron. Put off the ruckus till I turn my remuda over to the horse wrangler at daybreak. Show your kind heart, Ike!"

CHAPTER IV

NIGHT RIDING

IT WAS Humpy Jack the nighthawk who told Sheriff Ike Niber at supper time that whatever else Ornery Logan Jones might be, there was no discounting the fact that the son of a ——— was all cowman. And they needn't any of them worry about Logan Jones and his renegades from the Larb Hills and Missouri River badlands trying to stampede any of those five herds.

The wagon bosses from the Bear Paw Pool, the Milner Square, the Circle Diamond and the Long X were there in the Circle C mess tent, squatted on their hunkers nursing big cups of black coffee and having what the Injuns call a medicine talk. Telling one another where and how they were bedding their herds. Putting every damned man in the outfit on first guard and keeping 'em all on guard till daybreak. Doubling the herds if they got to drifting. Every man in every outfit but the cook and nighthawk standing night guard from dark till dawn. Medicine talk. Ramrod talk. The big dogs with the brass collars. The tally keepers and fellers that packed the checkbooks.

Then Humpy Jack told them all what he said they should be telling him because he'd never had the brains to run a wagon.

"Ornery Logan Jones and his tough hands will be settin' around the big warm stove a-playin' stud-hoss poker and drinkin' rot-gut forty rod likker at the whiskey peddler cabin in the Larb Hills. And in between poker hands and rounds of drinks and windy stories they'll be gittin' 'er figgered out how to beat them cattle rustlin' indictments Ike is fixin' to serve on 'em.

"Logan Jones is a cowman. He savvies them cattle that you got up this mornin' before the crow sang, to gather into the biggest round-up a man ever seen.

"You been holdin' them cattle bunched all day. Cuttin' and slicin' and workin' out the stray irons. The wind as cold as a gambler's heart. No feed and they never got a chance to water. Five mixed herds. Cows, calves, steers and bulls. Even with their paunches full of grass an' water and grazed onto a featherbed bedground, a mixed herd ain't nobody's sweatheart to hold and sing to of a soft moonlight night.

"Hear that wind howl down outa the Larb Hills. She's got a whine like a hungry wolf. Before the night's done that whine is goin' to howl like a lost soul from hell, a-prowlin' the cow country. You got cattle from the hills that's been choced around till they're ringy and ga'anted. The only cattle that'll stay on the bedground of a night like this will have to be hogtied, knocked in the head or shot between the horns.

"Them five herds you fellers aims to hold will be scattered before midnight like a crazy sheepherder's brains. You'll be humped up over your saddle horns a-cussin' and a-prayin' that your horse don't step his laig into a prairie dog or badger hole and pile up. It'll be blacker than a bushwhacker's sins and there ain't enough slickers made to shed the rain or keep the cold out of your marrow bones.

"Steal the Cross J whiskey keg and settle down to a good game of cut-throat poker and you'll be money ahead even if you all lose. That's what Ornery Logan Jones is usin' to spend the evenin'. For all your medicine talk and pow-wows, he's the slickest damned cowman of yuh all."

Humpy Jack stood there in his bear-

skin chaps and short buffalo coat, stuffing a sack of cold meat and bread and a bottle of strong black coffee into his pockets. His green-gray eyes glittered in the candle light and there was a wolfish grin on his face.

"When you other outfits find yourselves afoot in the mornin', limp on over and you kin straddle a good circle horse. The Circle C remuda will be in that rope corral at daybreak."

Humpy Jack let his remuda out of the rope corral. A dwarfish figure on the biggest horse in the Circle C cavvy, he hazed his remuda of two hundred and fifty odd head of horses into the thickening darkness. His voice barked profanely. His long blacksnake popped like a rapid fire gun. The night swallowed the hunchbacked nighthawk and his remuda. Back out of the gathering windswept darkness came the staccato popping of the blacksnake, the crackling cussing, the jingling of horse bells.

After he had gone with his remuda the men left back in the mess tent finished their cigarettes and black coffee and for that brief half-hour or so before the wagon bosses pulled out for their own outfits, they talked about Humpy Jack, the red-haired hunchbacked nighthawk with the legs and arms of a six foot man.

THEY said of Humpy Jack that he had once been a jockey on the California tracks and up in Canada and in his boyhood he had been as other boys, without any deformity. That he was rated among the best jockeys in the West. That he had been leading a large field on a fast track when his horse crossed its legs and went down. The boy Jack had been thrown. The bunched horses behind had trampled the young redheaded jockey. The best surgeons in the country had been unable to mend his twisted, crushed back and ribs. And so he had remained twisted and crooked and dwarfed while his arms and legs grew to their normal length and strength. Humpy Jack never spoke of that accident that had misshaped his body to make him unlike other men. That was not his way.

One cowpuncher said that he had seen a bronk at Miles City throw Humpy Jack five times. The bronk was a man killer, an outlawed bronk. Humpy Jack, bleeding from his mouth and nose and ears, had gotten back on the bronk. Spurred and quirted and rode until the bronk dropped dead between his legs.

Men who had seen him ride bronks and fight claimed that he had the insane temper of the devil in hell. That he was generous to his last dollar, the last tobacco in his sack, the last drink in his sobering-up bottle. That he never let down a friend. That he never forgave an enemy. That he had never been whipped by man or bronk.

The cow country claimed that Humpy Jack never had, never would have an equal when it came to nighthawking a cavvy of horses. Or driving four or six horses, hitched to a bed wagon.

They wondered when and how he would collect his bet from the Sykes reps. When and how he would pay off Logan Jones.

They remembered what the nighthawk had prophesied about the coming night. Rather than choce and mill the tallow off their beef steers or cripple cows and calves, they would turn their herds loose to drift if the storm broke bad. Cattle can always be rounded up again. But crippled cattle and horses have to be shot. Crippled cowpunchers threw an outfit short-handed. Rather than run the risks and suffer the losses of a stampede, they would turn loose their herds. Count today's work up to profit and loss. Hold another big round-up. Get this confusing and mystifying ownership of stray brands straightened out.

They agreed, these five wagon bosses of the biggest cow outfits in that part of Montana, that this big pool round-up working of the range where borders and boundaries and deadlines overlapped, was doomed to failure. It was no way to work the range. Racing for camp grounds was good sport but it didn't pay. Huge round-ups that gathered too many cattle to be worked in one or even two days, was folly. It meant the rough handling, chocing and working and re-working cattle. Crip-

pling calves, getting cows separated from their calves, knocking precious tallow poundage off beef steers. Jangling and quarreling and confusion among wagon bosses and cowpunchers.

Let the owners of these big outfits work the solution out on paper. Tally books and stubby pencils. Maps showing the boundary lines, owned land and claimed free range. Let the job get done on paper, then. And to hell with this rounding up of gigantic herds that it would take a week to work right. You can't gather and hold cattle night and day, close bunch and cut 'em, hold 'em off feed and water, without doing a lot of damage.

This five-six wagon pool working of the range was, they all decided, a failure. The only thing it had accomplished was the showing up of the Cross J outfit for a cattle rustling spread. It was hanging Ornery Logan Jones's hide on the fence. Cleaning the Larb Hills and badlands of rustlers. And that was thanks to Howdy Furnell and Jim Burkett, Ike Niber told them flatly.

Come a bad storm, the wagon bosses told one another as they got on their horses and headed for their camps, they'd turn loose their herds. Ride back to camp and crawl into the blankets.

That's what every man of them told the others. But each of those hard-headed wagon bosses was telling himself that he was holding his herd tonight, come hell, high water or Ornery Logan Jones and his renegades. He'd hold his herd and get the laugh on those other wagon bosses that quit their cattle and took their men off to bed like so many gutless sheepherders.

"We're holdin' them cattle," Oklahoma Jake told the Circle C cowpunchers, "if we have to rope, throw, hogtie, knock in the head and shoot 'em all.... Forty years a butcher and never cut a gut.... You hired out for tough hands. None of you kin claim he's afoot when he throws his laig acrost a Circle C geldin'. Play your strings out, cowhands." So he led the way out to the herd. Standing in his stirrups as he let his horse high-trot. Whistling tunelessly through set teeth.

Not until later did any of them remember what had become of Sheriff Ike Niber. He had been there in the mess tent when Humpy Jack delivered his vitriolic speech. Then while they were augering and doing their coffee cooling, the sheriff had slipped out of the tent, gotten on his horse and ridden alone into the night.

HUMPY JACK knew every horse in the Circle C remuda by name. He knew them all by their habits. Horses are clannish. A cavvy, left to graze of a night, will split up into various bunches. Each of those bunches will have its leader. And Humpy Jack had a horse bell strapped around the neck of each leader. Nights like tonight promised to be, the nighthawk had gotten half a dozen or more extra bells out of the bed wagon and had belled certain horses whose night habits he had carefully studied.

He could tell by the sound of a bell, which horse wore it. How many horses would probably be following that certain bell horse. As the night blackened he kept the remuda bunched and whenever a bell horse strayed in any direction, the blacksnake popped and mister bell horse and his following were hazed back into the remuda.

Humpy Jack chuckled and grinned and cussed to himself as the black night thickened. He knew where he was headed for with the Circle C cavvy and he needed no stars to guide him. Night riding was his business and his eyes and ears and other senses, including an infallible sense of direction, were trained to perfection.

At the edge of the Larb Hills Ornery Logan Jones had fenced off a 640 acre section of hay meadow and horse pasture where the uncut blue-joint and timothy wild hay touched a man-stirrups. Logan Jones always saved it for winter pasture. Padlocked gates and a stout five-wire barbed wire fence protected it.

Just before the storm struck Sun Prairie, about second guard time, Humpy Jack battered the padlock off the north gate, opened it and drifted his remuda into the fenced 640 acre section. Then he closed the gate and wired it shut.

His blacksnake coiled and tied by the saddle strings on his saddle cantle, Humpy Jack rode away from his pastured remuda and headed into the Larb Hills.

Winter-time, when he drifted with his hounds and pack outfit, he did a lot of wolfing in this part of the country. Stopping at ranches, at hidden outlaw hideouts, sometimes at the ranch called the Whiskey Camp. The Dutchman made good whiskey. He never sold to full blood Indians or the wrong 'breeds and the law let the Dutchman alone. It had never been a crime to make good whiskey and sell it right.

Humpy Jack and the Dutchman had spent many a snowbound winter week together. Drinking, swapping lies, playing checkers. The Dutchman had, during the years, listened to a lot of whiskey talk that he knew how to divide between the truth and whiskey lies. All manner of men had stopped at his Whiskey Camp. The Dutchman was known to be close-mouthed. Law officers like Sheriff Ike Niber knew that asking the Dutchman questions was just a waste of breath.

But the Dutchman had talked to Humpy Jack because the cow country knew that the hunchback nighthawk was almighty close-mouthed and minded his own business.

Tonight Humpy Jack was remembering things the Dutchman had told him from time to time. It seemed like a good time to pay the Dutchman a little visit. Get in out of the storm. Get a few shots of good corn likker inside a man's chilled belly. Mebbyso get a look at who might be riding there to the Whiskey Camp between now and daybreak. There was a shed where Humpy Jack could stable his horse. A little log cabin off a hundred yards or so from the main log saloon.

Humpy Jack was putting up his horse in the shed when the storm hit with a black rush that threatened to tear off the sod roof and rip the daubing and chinking out from between the logs.

He shoved hay into the manger and located a full quart in one of the Dutchman's caches. He grinned like a red long-jawed wolf as he pulled the cork with his teeth in the dark. The potent corn whiskey stung his throat and splashed like fire into his chilled belly. He told himself he'd have to hit it light. A man couldn't get drunk and get his chores done right. And Humpy Jack figured that he had chores a-plenty to tend to between now and daybreak when he shoved his remuda into the rope corral at the Circle C round-up camp.

That storm swept Sun Prairie like hell's own fury. The raw wind had whipped itself into a gale that ripped mess tents and bed tents up by their long stakes and tore the canvas to shreds. With it came hail. Hailstones the size of marbles. Then as big as sage-hen eggs. Lumps of round, hard ice driven by a forty mile gale. It drove cattle and horses into a run.

The Milner Square nighthawk got off his horse to lie down in the lee of a cutbank. His horse, struck by the heavy hailstones, jerked loose and left him afoot.

The Bear Paw Pool and Circle Diamond nighthawks had thrown their remudas together for better protection against the storm. They pulled coats and slickers up over their heads and the hailstones hit their backs like hard-thrown rocks. They grunted and cussed with pain, got separated and lost from one another.

The Long X had two men nighthawking. Texas boys who didn't know this new Montana country any too well even by daylight. They cussed the country and between them managed to hold a handful of horses, a couple of mules.

COWPUNCHERS on night guard had prepared as best they could for a black night filled with cold wind and rain. But not for a tornado that shot hailstones as big as duck eggs. They had trouble enough keeping on their horses. The cattle went to hell with the freak storm. A lot of them were lost for a couple of hours before they found camp. Or what was left of camp. Tents ripped and torn down. Cooks working in the dark to repair the damage, giving it up as a fool's job and bedding down in their mess wagons.

The wide breadth and long length of Sun Prairie held drifting, bawling cattle and scattered bunches of horses.

Sheriff Ike Niber tied his hat down with his black silk neck muffler, hunched inside his overcoat and chaps and let his horse drift, rump to the storm, till the horse found shelter in under a high clay cutbank. Cattle and loose horses found the same shelter. Ike could hear them in the darkness.

The heavy hail lasted less than half an hour. Time enough to do the damage.

When it had quit hailing and the wind had died down, Sheriff Ike Niber rode on to the Cross J camp.

The wagons were there. And the tarp-wrapped dead body of Nigger Joe. Wrecked tents and scattered bedrolls. That was all.

Ike wasn't too much surprised to find the Cross J camp deserted. They were holding no herd. The cook was dead. The stray-men who had been taking their orders from Logan Jones had smelled law trouble when they saw the cowman put under arrest and when they saw how Howdy Furnell and Stock Inspector Jim Burkett were holding back a lot of stray brands for inspection. Those renegades from the Larb Hills and the badlands weren't going to just hang around and wait to be picked up for cattle rustling. They were on the dodge right now. And if Humpy Jack was guessing right, the whole outfit would be gathered right now at the Dutchman's Whiskey Camp augering it out with the Sykes reps and Ornery Logan Jones.

Hard to tell what had become of Howdy Furnell and Jim Burkett. They had both split the blankets with Logan Jones. Thrown in together against the ornery old cowman who was their protection against the long arm of the law reaching out and grabbing them. But if they aimed to hamstring Logan Jones it looked to Ike like they were hanging each other with the same law noose that they were aiming to drop over Logan Jones's ornery head. And the only way Ike could begin to figure it out was like this: That Logan Jones had been playing his wagon boss and the new stock inspector against one another. Until he had gotten them so riled up that they agreed to forget their own personal grudge to go after the old son of a snake who had been ribbing them.

Jim Burkett had told Ike that he and Howdy Furnell were the Larb Hills Cattle Company that owned the Block K and Double Circle brands. Ike had seen those two brands on cows that he figured had once worn the Square, the Circle Diamond and the Half Circle C brands. And while the job of brand working had been smooth enough to pass the average inspection, such as brands get on a general round-up, they wouldn't stand a close inspection. Those brands had been worked. Claiming ownership to the Block K and Double Circle brands meant just what Jim Burkett had said. The Montana prison at Deer Lodge. But how would that be putting Logan Jones in the pen?

Ike was willing to gamble that Jim Burkett and Howdy Furnell didn't have enough money between them to blow on a man-size drunk. They didn't own an acre of ground or so much as a wind-bellied mammyless calf between them. Howdy had his ramrod's pay and he spent it like all cowpunchers spend their money when they hit town. Jim Burkett had this new job as stock inspector that paid about the same kind of wages. Logan Jones was the real owner of those two brands. Logan Jones was the Larb Hills Cattle Company. But that old wolf had been smart enough to register those brands in the name of the Larb Hills Cattle Company and write in the names of Howdy Furnell and Jim Burkett as owners of the company. Those two young cowhands couldn't out-wolf old Ornery Logan Jones that easy. It looked to Ike like those two cowhands had gone off half-cocked. They were sending themselves to the Deer Lodge pen or down the Outlaw Trail, one or the other. Ike told himself he didn't like it worth a damn.

He prowled around the camp looking for signs of a gun fight. But the tarp-wrapped gray-black corpse of Nigger Joe was the only dead man he could find. Howdy and Jim Burkett must have taken their quarrel on to the Whiskey Camp.

Sheriff Ike Niber headed for there. He was chilled and bruised by the hailstones and that made thinking come mighty hard. But he aimed to ride on till he turned up the hole card of Ornery Logan Jones.

CHAPTER V

WHISKEY CAMP

HUMPY JACK had seen a bunch of saddled horses standing at the hitchrack in front of the bigger log cabin that the Dutchman used for a saloon. He had seen men lined up, elbow to elbow along the pine board bar. Other men sitting around the several poker tables. The saloon lit up by a big kerosene lamp that hung in a bracket and chains arrangement from the ridge log.

There had been no sign of the Dutchman, either behind the bar or carrying drinks to the tables. And if the Dutchman had been in there a man would have seen him before he saw anyone else. Because the Dutchman stood six feet six in his wooden shoes and weighed better than three hundred pounds. A man of tremendous girth, he moved like some big clumsy-footed animal, his wooden shoes clump-clumping on the pine plank floor of his saloon. Red-faced, with huge mustaches that were his great pride, he roared drinking songs that nobody understood, thumped friends on the back with a heartiness that rattled their teeth and knocked their wind out. And when he laughed the glasses and bottles on the back bar rattled and clinked. Tears rolled from his china blue eyes down his red cheeks. His huge hand would slap the bar and bottles would jump. The Dutchman liked to sing his drinking songs in German and laugh at his own clumsy and pointless jokes. Over and over he related the same dozen or so anecdotes and his customers laughed uproariously with him and got a free round of drinks.

The Dutchman raised chickens and ducks and geese. He had a milk cow and a big pen full of pigs. Cats and mongrel dogs. When he milked the cow the cats gathered around and he would squirt milk into their faces and laugh as he watched them lick the milk off with their pink tongues. Most of the milk was poured into a big shallow pan for the cats. He saved a quart or two for himself. Chickens and animals were all over-fed. He cooked and ate gigantic meals and fed everybody who stopped there. It never occurred to the Dutchman to charge money for a meal.

"For schnapps, Ja!" he would tell Humpy Jack. "I get money for the schnapps. Whiskey is mine business. But to charge a hungry man for grub, nein!"

White men of all kinds, good and bad. Breeds. Injuns. He fed them. He was a damn good Dutchman.

For all his huge bulk and gigantic strength, the Dutchman was a man of peace. He could not understand quarreling or violence. It was impossible to pick a quarrel with him. Call him all the fighting names in the book and the Dutchman would nod his head with its thick roached graying blond hair.

"Ja! Ja!" he would agree in the tone a man uses to humor a child. "Names. Sure. Himmel. Names. Foolishness. Have a drink. First today! Now we sing. Ach, du lieber Augustine!"

Whenever a crowd of cowpunchers like Logan Jones's showed up, the Dutchman would turn the place over to them. He would sell them what he figured would be enough whiskey to last them through their drunk. Add enough to pay for what cheap glasses they would be apt to break. Then take his dogs and cats and go off to his cabin with a bottle and his long-stemmed pipe and go to bed. The Dutchman was capable of snoring peacefully through any kind of racket the drunken customers might kick up. He let them alone. They let him alone. It was a good way to run a business.

Humpy Jack knew that the Dutchman would be sleeping over at his private cabin where he slept, cooked and ate. Because that renegade bunch in the saloon were a rough and quarrelsome and bad-tempered outfit. The Dutchman seldom spoke badly of any man. But he had told Humpy Jack that he did not like Logan Jones and the three Sykes reps.

"Better, Chack," he had said, "ven Yones und der Syksies shows up, the Dutchman go to bed."

Well, Logan Jones and his outfit of tough cowpunchers and renegades from the badlands had taken over the saloon tonight. There was a big commotion when the heavy hail stampeded their horses at the hitchrack. They came piling out, cussing and dodging the big icy lumps of wind-driven hail. Getting in one another's way as they stumbled from the lamplight into the black storm and tried to grab trailing bridle reins and hackamore ropes.

Humpy Jack squatted on his boot heels, his blacksnake coiled loosely around his neck with the big swivel wooden handle dangling down across his deformed chest. His green eyes glittered in the dark that hid his long-jawed wolfish grin. He spotted them as they came lurching out of the lighted saloon.

Ornery Logan Jones. The three Sykes reps. The Cross J cowhands. Renegades from the badlands. Twenty-five or thirty men, all told.

No sign of Howdy Furnell or Stock Inspector Jim Burkett.

HUMPY JACK made himself comfortable and nibbled at his bottle of corn likker. A warm glow spread over his misshapen body and he fought back the urge to go over to the Dutchman's house for just one game of checkers or pinochle. He liked the Dutchman. Then came the all but overpowering urge to slip out there with his blacksnake and whip Logan Jones and the three Sykes brothers to death.

Humpy Jack shoved the cork back into the neck of the bottle. He must be getting drunk. The sign wasn't right yet for a ruckus. He had come here to see just how the new stock inspector and the Cross J wagon boss were going to tackle Logan Jones and his tough spread. Lay back and watch till the sign was right. Then draw cards in the game. When he had argued himself into a less vicious frame of mind he allowed himself another drink. Not a big drink. Not any little old two-bit nibble, either. Just a man-sized swallow of the best corn likker in Montana. He worked on his sense of humor now and chuckled to himself as he watched and listened to those men out yonder trying to catch their spooked horses and at the same time keep the big hail rocks from knocking their brains out. He heard their grunts and howls as the hailstones battered their heads and faces and beat them back into the shelter of the saloon. Horses dragging bridle reins and hackamore ropes, stampeding for the shelter of the brush beyond, stirrups popping. Ornery Logan Jones cursing. The three Sykes reps whining and yelping like damned coyotes in a trap.

This was a show. Something to tell the boys back at camp. To tell in town at the saloons.

The ground was white with the big hailstones. Humpy Jack reached out from his shelter and found a big one. Big as a hen egg. He wiped it off on his sleeve and chewed the ice. Corn likker and ice balls for a chaser. Too bad the Dutchman wasn't here to get a big laugh out of it. The Dutchman loved his jokes. Mostly, when Humpy Jack told him comical stories, he had to re-tell them until the point sounded flat as stale beer. But here was one that the Dutchman could get the point. Humpy Jack had a mind to slip over yonder to the cabin and wake up the Dutchman. But by that time the hail slacked off and the wind died down and it began to drizzle.

Ornery Logan Jones shouted to the three Sykes reps to gather them horses and not miss any and to throw the saddled horses in the Dutchman's corral and stand guard there. He cussed them and ordered them around like a slave driver giving orders to three buck niggers. Those three big nephews of his took more off Ornery Logan Jones than any human with an ounce of guts would take off any man. Why didn't the three of 'em get whiskey-brave and kill the old wart hog and claim his outfit? They were his only kin.

But Logan Jones went limping back into the saloon with the others and the three Sykes reps went off down into the brush to gather the horses. The show was over.

Humpy Jack was allowing himself another drink when two men rode up out of the black night. They left their horses in behind a brush patch and went on foot to the saloon. They walked in together, their hands on their guns. Humpy Jack swallowed quickly and pounded the cork into the bottle neck with the heel of his hand.

He grinned wickedly to himself. Howdy Furnell and Jim Burkett were the two men who had just walked into the saloon.

Humpy Jack had shed his overcoat and kicked off his chaps. He slid his six-shooter from the chaps pocket into the waistband of his overalls. Slipping the blacksnake from around his neck, he carried it, coiled, in his left hand. His long legs carried him to a window at the side of the saloon. The hailstones had smashed out the window panes and he could see into the place and hear every word that was said. Watch every move that was made. This was going to be a showdown.

ORNERY LOGAN JONES stood with his back against the pine board bar, a bottle in his left hand, his right hand on his gun.

"It's about time," he snarled at Howdy Furnell and Jim Burkett, "that you two damned fools were showin' up. You've both shore played purty hell. Was you drunk or just plain locoed?"

"We'll do the talkin'," said Howdy Furnell. "Where's the Sykes reps?"

"Holdin' the horses. Never mind the Sykes boys. What I want to know is just what the hell do you two jailbirds think you're a-doin'?"

"We're sellin' out," said Howdy Furnell. "You're a-buyin'."

"You ain't got so much as a wind-bellied calf or locoed colt to sell to nobody. I pulled you two things outa the pen. You keep on actin' locoed and it'll be a damn sight easier to throw yuh both back into the pen than it was to buy yuh out. I own you both. Like I'd own a couple of bronks that's fergot they been halter broke. Make a gun-play and the boys here will fill your bellies full of lead."

"You'll be the first man in this saloon to die," said Jim Burkett, "if you sic your dogs on us. Me'n Howdy got 'er made."

"Since when did you two Texicans git so pardner-like? Your daddies and kinfolks killed one another in the fence cutter war down in Texas. You was shooting at one another when the Rangers grabbed the pair of yuh and sent yuh both to the Texas pen for murder. You'd have been rottin' there right now if it wasn't for my money buyin' you out. Like I'd buy two bulls outa the slaughter pen. Texas was goin' to hang yuh both. By hell, you both shore got short memories. I got you free. I own yuh both. You're both in the Cross J brand."

"You been singin' that same tune too long, mister," said Jim Burkett. "It's wore out."

"You can't treat us," said Howdy Furnell, "like you treat them three Sykes things. You don't own us. We're wearin' no man's brand. I figgered I had that pounded into your head this mornin'."

Memory of that beating made Logan Jones snarl. He took a long slow pull at his bottle and spat through broken teeth.

"You made a bad mistake this mornin', Howdy," Ornery Logan Jones said slowly, measuring each word.

"Don't pull that gun, mister," said Jim Burkett. "I done told you that me'n Howdy had 'er made to kill you if you started a ruckus. We ain't runnin' no whizzer. You ain't got men enough here to keep us from killin' you before they deal us ourn. Take your hand off that gun."

Ornery Logan Jones let his claw-like hand come slowly away from his wooden handled six-shooter. The silence in the saloon was tense and deadly now. For a long moment no man broke it. The cowman's slitted, bloodshot eyes, set in bruised puffy cushions, slid from Furnell to Burkett. The two Texans were here to kill him. And Ornery Logan Jones, though not a coward, was not yet ready to die.

"Name your game, hombres!" His voice sounded harsh as it broke the taut silence.

"That," grinned Jim Burkett mirthlessly, "sounds more like it. Call off your dogs. Tell 'em they ain't killin' nobody. Then fetch a bottle over to that corner table where we kin make our deal."

Logan Jones nodded. His eyes glittered like those of a wolf.

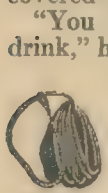
"Take 'er easy, boys," he told his men, "we're all of us gittin' riled up over nothin'. Howdy and Jim is good hands. Howdy Furnell runs the Cross J wagon. I done had that tin badge pinned on Jim Burkett's shirt so's we could kinda git a tail holt on the cow business around here. It was that damned sheriff that spoiled the batter. Sheriff Ike Niber is the man I'd like to git at the end of my gun."

Logan Jones' battered face twisted in a wry grin. "Arrested me for killin' that buck nigger. Put that humpbacked nighthawk to ride herd on me. I worked that Humpy Jack over with a tent stake and come away. Let's all have a drink. I'll pay a thousand dollars cash to the man that hangs Sheriff Ike Niber's hide on the fence. Let's drink on that 'un, you curly wolves."

Ornery Logan Jones was trying to put his usual bluster into his voice but somehow he couldn't quite do it. Nobody said much as they lined up at the bar and a Cross J cowpuncher played bartender.

Logan Jones took his bottle and walked over to a corner table with Howdy Furnell and Jim Burkett. The wagon boss and stock inspector kept the cowman between them. They shoved their chair backs against the corner walls so that Logan Jones was forced to sit with his back towards the bar. He wasn't liking it but he was pretending not to notice that the two Texans were placing him at a big disadvantage. He sat the almost full bottle of whiskey in the middle of the big, round, green cloth covered table.

"You both look like you need a drink," he said gruffly. "Have at 'er."



HUMPY JACK heard something in the blackness behind him. He crouched low and crept off along the log wall. Hidden by the heavy darkness, he crouched in behind a couple of big empty whiskey barrels.

He had hardly gained his hiding place when he saw a man's shadowy form take vague shape. He pulled his breath in sharply as he saw Sheriff Ike Niber's tall form move up close to the window with its hail-smashed pane. Ike stood there listening, his gun in his hand, peering into the lighted saloon.

Then off to Humpy Jack's right other shadows moved. Blacker, denser blots in the black night. And Humpy Jack knew that the three Sykes reps must have sighted Ike when he rode up and got off his horse and they were now slipping up on the sheriff, their guns in their hands. Perhaps they had even heard the loud voice of Logan Jones putting a thousand-dollar bounty on Ike Niber's head.

The Sykes reps had killed men before and been paid in real cash money by Ornery Logan Jones. The Dutchman had told Humpy Jack about a man or two who had died like that. The Sykes brothers were born bushwhackers. Cowardly, cunning, crack shots. Brave when the night hid them and their guts were on fire with booze.

The three of them were crouched close together not ten feet now from where Humpy Jack stood.

"It's Ike . . . thousand dollars on the barrel head . . . we all three shoot at once. . . ."

Their gun hammers clicked. Ike's tall back against the lighted window made a perfect target.

This was not a part of what he had come here for. This was gumming the cards for Humpy Jack. But he couldn't let a good man like old Ike get murdered.

The twenty-foot blacksnake cut the air with a whispering, whining whistle. The last ten feet of its braided length struck the three necks, tightened in a wrapping, cutting coil and jerked viciously.

Three heads banged together. Three six-shooters exploded, their slugs going wild. Then Humpy Jack's insane temper, fired by two much raw whiskey, turned the nighthawk into something not quite human.

The braided lash made whining, whistling sounds. The wide buckskin popper was not making a sound because there was no flipping jerk to make it pop. The twenty-foot whip writhed like something alive as it cut the faces and necks and arms and backs and bellies of the three Sykes reps.

Sam Sykes tried to get a shot at Humpy Jack. The whip wrapped around his wrist and forearm like a coiling snake. Jerked. There was the sickening crack of the man's arm broken at the elbow.

Tate Sykes started to run. The whip coiled around his neck and jerked. The braided lash cut and burned at the same time. Tate let out a choked scream as he was jerked backwards onto the ground.

Mel Sykes had dropped his gun. He rushed blindly. The whip cut his face like a knife. Slashing, tearing skin and flesh away with its whispering braided length. Mel went to his knees sobbing and slobbering as he tried to protect his lacerated face with his arms. Then he crumpled and lay there in the black mud and half-melted hail, quivering as the whiplash ripped and cut.

The three Sykes reps lay near one another in the mud and Humpy Jack's blacksnake whispered and whined like some live thing, tearing their shirts from their backs and ripping skin and slivers of bleeding flesh away from the bone.

Until the insane fury of Humpy Jack, nighthawk, was spent and he stood there panting like a man who has run a long ways. He was dripping with sweat and shivering. He found his bottle and yanked it from his flank pocket. Pulling the cork with teeth that chattered. Tilting the bottle and letting the raw whiskey run down his gullet in long, panting swallows.

Then Humpy Jack, for the first time, heard the shooting and the crashing din of wild free-for-all fighting inside the saloon.

CHAPTER VI

GUN RUCKUS

SHERIFF IKE NIBER had ridden up in the darkness to the Dutchman's Whiskey Camp. Past the log barn and pole corral where saddled horses moved in the darkness and the three Sykes reps were sitting on their hunkers, nursing a half-empty bottle of whiskey and listening to what went on in the saloon.

Ike Niber was one of that breed of men who never seem to know the full meaning of fear. And that makes for boldness where caution would be wiser and safer tactics. The three Sykes brothers sighted this night rider and lay low. While Ike rode up to the corral, stepped down off his horse and dropped the bridle reins to range-tie the animal.

The voices that came from the saloon were loud enough to carry. Ike heard most of Ornery Logan Jones's last speech and grinned to himself as he picked his way through the darkness to the lighted window. It was better to get the lay of the land before he walked into a place where a thousand-dollar bounty had just been put on his scalp.

From where he stood outside the

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broken window, Ike could see every man in the place. He could have tossed his hat through the window and onto the round, green-covered poker table where Howdy Furnell and Stock Inspector Jim Burkett sat watching Logan Jones.

The Cross J cowpunchers and the renegades from the Larb Hills and the badlands along the Missouri River were lined up at the bar. They weren't talking among themselves because they were watching the three men at the table. Watching and listening and waiting, perhaps, for some covert signal from Logan Jones. If Logan Jones dared give such a signal, then they were more or less reluctantly willing to jerk their guns and kill Howdy Furnell and Jim Burkett, thus earning the fighting wages the ornery old cowman paid them. It was, judging from the way they were acting, not a job to their liking. That pair of young Texans had shown nerve and they would be shooting fast and straight for a few split seconds before the guns quit smoking.

"It's good likker," said Ornery Logan Jones, eyeing the two Texans. "Hit it."

"When we git the deal made," said Jim Burkett, "we'll drink."

"You're sellin' out, Logan," grinned Howdy Furnell. "Lock, stock and barrell. The Cross J and all them stray irons you got registered in other men's names. It's the one and only way that you and these other hombres kin keep outa the pen. Me'n Jim Burkett is buyin' you out."

Humpy Jack crouched in the darkness, behind a couple of empty whiskey barrels.

"With what?" snorted the cowman. "Cow chips?"

"It'll be up to Ike Niber," said Jim Burkett. "When and how much you git paid. We're turnin' the outfit over to him."

"What kind of a locoed whizzer are you two Texicans tryin' to run on a man, anyhow?"

"When Howdy Furnell fetched stolen cattle up outa the Larb Hills and told the Sykes reps to work them hills clean, Howdy was takin' my orders. I told him you'd handed me a bench warrant and told me to take him dead. That I had a law badge and Jones's money behind me. I told Howdy Furnell where he stood before he led that circle on the

early mornin' round-up. I wanted him to know what kind of a double-crossin' snake you was.

"Howdy showed me a bench warrant made out for me, Jim Burkett. That you'd told him to hand that warrant to Sheriff Ike Niber to serve, in case I didn't pass inspection on a lot of stolen cattle wearin' them stray irons.

"You never figgered that Howdy Furnell and Jim Burkett would git together. Because we'd fought one another in that range war back in Texas where our daddies and other kinfolks got killed long ago.

"There was one thing you didn't know about us when you got us outa the Texas pen to do your cattle rustlin', Jones. You didn't know that the Furnells and the Burketts had fought one another fair and square down yonder. That we wasn't damned sneakin' snakes like your three Sykes reps. Because me'n Howdy Furnell didn't have nothin' to do with one another, you figgered we'd jump at the chance to double-cross each other. You was dead wrong, mister.

"Me'n Howdy Furnell shaken hands and talked things over the night before the big round-up when you told me to come to the Cross J camp. We decided that we was gittin' a raw deal. You'd had the Block K and Double Circle irons registered under the name of the Larb Hills Cattle Company, Howdy Furnell and Jim Burkett, owners. And you had them brand artists yonder put a lot of stolen cattle in them two irons. You had me made stock inspector so that them stolen cattle, if they was gathered on this big round-up, would be inspected and passed. But if Ike Niber or any of them wagon bosses found out there was worked brands, Howdy Farnell and Jim Burkett would go to the pen.

"So we decided to git religion, mister. We rounded up them cattle in the stray brands and I had 'em held back outa the stray cut for inspection. I told Ike Niber that me'n Howdy Furnell was the Larb Hills Cattle Company. That we would go to the pen if we had to. But we was takin' Logan Jones along. It would be worth a stretch at Deer Lodge, mister, to see you doin' the rest of your life in the pen.

"You kin sign over the Cross J and all your stray irons to me and Howdy Furnell, mister. Then pull out. Or you kin go along to the Deer Lodge pen with us and learn how to make horsehair bridles. That's our deal. We're shovin' you down the Outlaw Trail where you've sent some mighty good men from time to time. Me'n Howdy will turn the outfit over to Sheriff Ike Niber. Mebbyso there'll be somethin' left for us when we serve our time and git outa the pen. That's the game, mister. Now turn loose your dogs, mister, if you want to die quick!"

THE six-shooters of Howdy Furnell and Stock Inspector Jim Burkett were pointed straight at the belly of Ornery Logan Jones.

The cowman's bloodshot eyes shifted like those of a trapped wolf. He could give the signal and the two Texicans would die. But Logan Jones knew that he would die with them. Or he could sign over the Cross J outfit and all his stray irons to this cold-eyed pair and quit Montana.

It was a tough decision, either way he looked at it. He had built up his outfit with a running iron and gun, stolen and murdered to make the Cross J the big spread it now was. And these two gun-slinging Texans were taking it away from him.

Ornery Logan Jones grinned twistedly and reached for the whiskey bottle. But whatever decision he was about to make after he drank, was never voiced.

From outside came the barking roar of three six-shooters. Then other sounds. And framed in the window was the tall, rawboned Sheriff Ike Niber.

Ike had been prodded into action by the shots behind him. There was no time to find out what those shots meant. His job lay inside the saloon. He came through the broken window, his six-shooter in his hand. Its long barrel seemed to cover every man along the bar. His voice was hard-bitten.

"Stand your hands! You're all under arrest!"

The barrel of Stock Inspector Jim Burkett's six-shooter tilted upward from

the level of Logan Jones's belly. Its heavy .45 slug shot out the light. Just as Howdy Furnell sent the big poker table crashing over on top of Logan Jones. The darkness was filled with crimson-orange gun flashes. The roar of heavy caliber six-shooters was deafening.

Sheriff Ike Niber was knocked to the floor by the hurtling weight of a man's body. The man who had knocked him down rolled over and over with him, then pinned him flat on his belly.

"Stand at your back, Ike, till your belly caves in!" Ike Niber recognized Jim Burkett's voice in his ear. "Lay flat!"

"Logan Jones!" Ike found his voice. His wind had been knocked out. "I gotta git 'im!"

"He's Howdy Furnell's bear meat. Lay flat. Let the rest of 'em kill off one another. There ain't a good man amongst 'em."

It sounded like they were all mixed up in one big rip-snorting free-for-all battle. A few guns spewed fire. But mostly it was smashing chairs and tables and bottles. Then men were charging out the front door and running towards the corral where their saddled horses were. The fighting was over almost as abruptly as it had begun.

Sheriff Ike Niber and Stock Inspector Jim Burkett went out the back door. The clouds were breaking and the round white moon was riding in between broken clouds. Jim Burkett led the way to a patch of heavy buckbrush. Howdy Furnell stood there with their two saddled horses.

"That was a hell of a fool play to make, Ike," he said. "You shot up much?"

"Nary a scratch. Jolted some. Jim Burkett knocked the wind outa me. Throwed me down and held me."

"Just about every renegade in the place was shootin' at you," said Howdy Furnell flatly. "You picked a hell of a time. . . ."

Neither of the two Texans mentioned Ornery Logan Jones. Ike asked no questions.

Men were riding their horses out of the big pole corral, spurring off into the night on a run. It was every man for himself and the devil grab the hindmost.

Then Ike saw Humpy Jack standing there in a patch of moonlight. The nighthawk's long legs were widespread. He had a whiskey bottle in one hand, his blacksnake in the other. His hat was off and his red hair hung dankly down across his forehead. His long-jawed, hawk-beaked face looked as gray as ashes in the moonlight and his eyes were bloodshot and as green as bottle glass. There was a wolfish grin on his face as he slowly coiled his twenty-foot whip.

Then Ike and Jim Burkett and Howdy Furnell saw the twitching moaning, whip-torn Sykes reps. All three of them lying there in the black mud, whimpering and slobbering like whipped animals. Humpy Jack grinning down at them, coiling his blood-wet blacksnake.

"Good Gawdamighty!" said Ike Niber in a croaking whisper.

He remembered the three shots. The whine of wild bullets. Other sounds. He walked over to where the nighthawk stood. Humpy Jack grinned at him.

"I collected me a little gamblin' debt, Ike. Where's Ornery Jones?"

"I think he's in the saloon," said Ike slowly. "Dead. Shot twice in the briskit."

HOWDY FURNELL and Jim Burkett strode up. They flinched a little as they looked at the whip-ripped Sykes reps.

"It's your mess, Ike," said Jim Burkett.

"We better git the Dutchman awake," Ike said, and Humpy Jack headed for the Dutchman's house, saying he knew the only way to wake the Dutchman.

A couple of minutes later dogs were barking and growling. Humpy Jack's voice sounded, cussing them. The growling and snarling and barking turned to yelping whines of welcome. A light showed inside the house. Cats scurried and meowed. Then the Dutchman's snoring rattled and gurgled and stopped. Then the house was filled with bellowing laughter.

"Humpy Yack!" boomed the Dutchman's roaring voice. "Gott in Himmel, mein friend Yack! Gifs it a game of

pinochle, Yack! Oder is dem verdammter schweins still mit?"

"Better come over and take a look at the damage," said Humpy Jack.

He came out carrying a lantern. Behind him came the Dutchman, tucking the tail of a red flannel nightshirt into his pants and hitching his suspenders over his shoulders. Clumping along in his wooden shoes, a nightcap with a pom-pom set rakishly on his head.

"I got it a new vun, Yack. A new chicken. One uff dem hoo-hoo chickens, by Yimminies. By the daytime she schleeps. All night she goed hooo-hoo, hooo-hoo. Und she catches mice like der kitties, Ja!" The Dutchman's big laugh boomed. Humpy Jack was the only man he never slapped on the back.

The Dutchman had slept soundly through all the gun racket.

"The only way to wake the Dutchman," grinned Humpy Jack, "is to tickle his feet."

Ornery Logan Jones was dead. Shot twice, as Ike Niber had guessed, through the breastbone.

There were three dead renegades and two dead Cross J cowpunchers. Save for these dead men, the saloon was empty. It looked like an earthquake and cyclone had struck it.

The Dutchman fetched a wicker demijohn and some new glasses from the cellar. His oldest and best corn whiskey. His private stock. He said he would get some 'breeds to bury the dead men or haul the dead bodies to town in a wagon. Ike said the wagon wasn't necessary. The dead men might as well be buried here.

Humpy Jack said he had to get back to his horses. The Dutchman made him promise to come soon again for a game of pinochle and to see the hoo-hoo chicken. Humpy Jack promised.

After he had ridden away, they got the three Sykes reps into the saloon, fed them some whiskey, bandaged their whip-torn faces and backs and bellies, and showed them the dead body of Ornery Logan Jones.

"The Cross J outfit is goin' to belong to Howdy Furnell and Jim Burkett,"

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10 DIME ALL STORIES COMPLETE WESTERN MAGAZINE

Sheriff Ike Niber told the three brothers. "If I was you three gents, I'd just pack up and quit Montana and never come back. It was you three fellers that tried to collect the thousand-dollar bounty Logan Jones put on my hide. You'd have shot me in the back if it hadn't been for Humpy Jack. So long."

Ike told Jim Burkett to keep his stock inspector job. They'd get those strays divided back among their real owners. That as far as he and the law were concerned, Howdy Furnell and Jim Burkett could live to a ripe old age here in Montana without ever learning how to make a horsehair bridle.

After a few drinks with the Dutchman, they got on their horses and headed for Sun Prairie.

IN THE early gray light of dawn, Humpy Jack hazed a remuda of nearly six hundred head of saddle horses across the level stretch of Sun Prairie. His blacksnake popping like a pistol. Horse bells jingling.

His Circle C remuda was intact, down to the last horse. He had picked up as many more horses that wore the Long X, the Circle Diamond, and Milner Square, Cross J and Bear Paw Pool brands.

The rope corral at the Circle C camp was not large enough to hold all the horses.

Wagon bosses and cowpunchers from the other outfits, afoot save for the nearly played-out night horses they rode towards the Circle C camp, saw the huge remuda, heard the crackling pop of the blacksnake, saw the dwarfish Humpy Jack haze the big hunch of horses towards the Circle C camp.

Today and tomorrow and the next day they would spend hunting horses and gathering spilled cattle and getting the big herd worked. Then the outfits would split up and work the range as they had always worked it. No more big pool gatherments. They had learned their lesson.

The mess tent was too badly ripped to put up and the round-up cook worked over his stove out in the open.

Humpy Jack turned the huge cavvy of horses over to the horse wrangler. He swung to the ground and pulled the saddle from his leg-weary, sweaty horse.

Humpy Jack grinned at Oklahoma Jake and pointed to the wagon bosses who were riding across Sun Prairie towards the Circle C camp. Sheriff Ike Niber and Howdy Furnell and Stock Inspector Jim Burkett were coming from the direction of the Larb Hills.

"It looks," he said to Jake and the cook and the staring cowhands, "like we're havin' a son of a ——— for breakfast. Several of 'em."

But Humpy Jack was really grinning when he said it.

Then Ingleson was lying on the floor. . . . and that was all Joe Tom could remember.

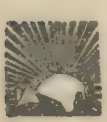
The Drumlin of Joe Tom

By THOMAS H. RADDALL

IN OUR province there is scarcely a brook where you can't pan a trace of gold, if you work at it. A queer thing, that, in a region where no man makes easy living, and since it was first discovered men have sunk their savings and their sweat in holes all over the countryside, in hopes of fortune. Here and there

in the bush you find the gray heaps of tailings, the rotten and collapsed shaft-timbers, the red-rusted boilers and scrap, the scattered bricks and crazy wooden ruins of small crushers, or maybe only the foundation stones of the buildings and huckleberry bushes sprouting in the red mould that once was beams and planks and boards; and you say what fools men are. Fools, maybe. But gold is there. That is the devil of it, the grinning, teasing, beckoning, blood-squeezing, sweat-drinking devil of it. Pray with me that Satan, who blew these thin veins of ore into our bedrock in the first place. will suck them all back into the hot maw of the earth, out of sight and mind. I am thinking of Joe Tom's gold mine.

It is strange to me, an old man who has for fifty-five years lived the nomad life of a Methodist minister, who has lived the past thirty on the shores of the Pacific, a continent's width from home—it is strange to come back and find myself a Rip Van Winkle, seeing new faces, new homes, new roads, new this and that in the old scenes, to find myself unknown; and yet to hear the country folk talking of gold, of a mother lode, of an Eldorado hidden in what is still the wilderness of western Nova Scotia; to find the legend of Joe Tom's mine widely spread and firmly held—and to realize that I alone know the truth—the secret, if you like.



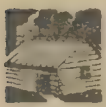
LET ME begin at the beginning, my own beginning in the little white farmhouse looking out upon Fairy Lake. That was in 1861, when old men lived who were the pioneers of that inland district. I have sat on the knee of a man who was in the *Shannon's* foretop when she fought the *Chesapeake*. Does that sound incredible? My grandfather was the John Devonshire who first ventured up the river from the coast, and cut out a farm in the lake country amongst the Indians.

He got along well with them, perhaps because he had to; at any rate he learned their life and language, and afterwards, when the settlements came and spread, he was the Indians' friend and counsellor in all their dealings with the whites. My father inherited those responsibilities, and I well remember the lean proud men, the silent brown women, the famished bright eyes of the children, drifting into our big kitchen when times were hard, and my mother feeding them beans, and corned beef and pork, and bread and molasses and such-like. I remember how much those brown people ate, and the way they went off without thanks, without words of any sort; and how they brought gifts of moose and caribou meat whenever their hunting was fortunate, and bear hams for smoking, and sacks of wild duck and geese and partridge which they dumped in a cloud of feathers on the kitchen floor, and withes strung with fat trout. They sometimes brought furs, which my father would never accept. So they traded the furs in New Kerry settlement for odds and ends of clothing, and bright trash for their women, and powder and shot for their old guns, and for rum. Mostly for rum, I'm afraid.

They lived in little gipsy groups, wintering in the lake country near the farms, and moving down the rivers to the coast for the spring run of smelt, and the kiack run, the salmon run, and the easy life by the clam flats. In fall they appeared again, mysteriously, amongst the bright leaves of the hardwoods by the lakeside, and patched up their old bark wigwams for winter, and gathered dead limbs for fuel, piling them tent-fashion to keep them dry and clear of the snow. They buried their occasional dead in an ancient cemetery of their people across the big lake, scratching shallow graves in the gravel under the tall red pines, and to keep off intruders told how the lake was haunted by little spirits. The Scotch, and the English like my grandfather, laughed at those tales, though they respected the brown men's graves. But the New Kerry folk believed in leprechauns and such-like themselves, and called the place Fairy Lake.

Ten years before I was born, an Australian miner went home from the California diggings and found gold on his own farm, and started the great Australian rush. That set people all over the world scratching in their own back yards, the Bluenoses with the rest. Gold was found all over the Atlantic slope of

our peninsula, in wandering meager veins that seldom paid to mine; promises that went on and on with no fulfilment. Where the veins crossed was often a pocket of nuggets and dust, a swelling of rich ore, just enough to whet the appetite for more, for another rummage in the bush, another stripping of the vein, another shaft, another stope, another pouring of money and sweat into the hole in the ground.



ONE DAY—it must have been in '71, for I was about ten—Joe Tom walked into our house to see father. This Joe Tom was a fine Indian. With the Maltee boys and some others he had given up the wandering habit of his people and cleared a bit of land by the shore of Fairy Lake, not far from ours. He built a small log house, and a barn of long slabs from the sawmill at Jock's Landing, and kept a pair of work-oxen and a cow and some hens and pigs and a squaw named Lizzie. They were childless, and Lizzie had adopted a half-breed child, fruit of a lumberman's fancy for an Indian woman up the lake, a little dark girl-thing they called Molly. Joe Tom was a good farmer as Indians go, but now and again the old free life caught hold and dragged him off into the bush alone for weeks on end. He knew the wilderness of lakes and forest in the western thumb of our province as you know the lines on your palm, and whenever Judge Carron came to hunt and fish he hired Joe Tom for guide.

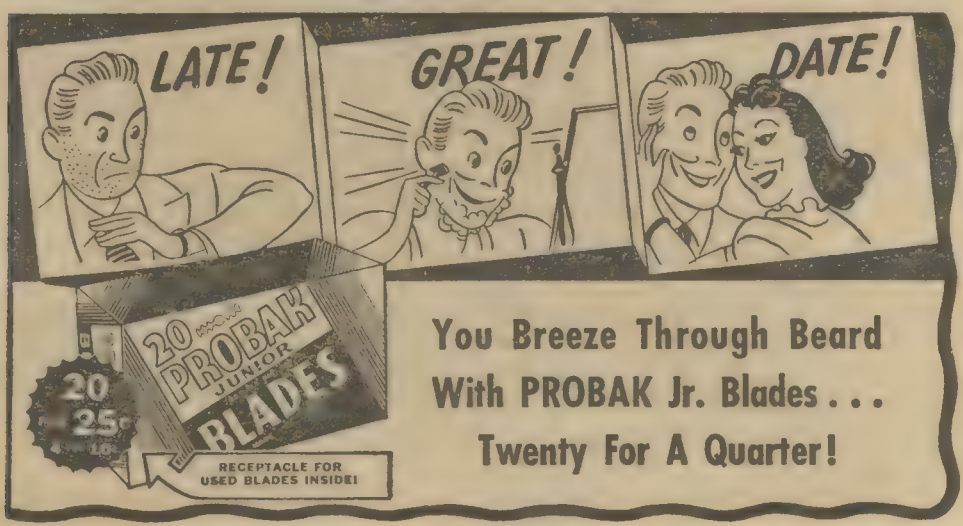
I was in the parlour when Joe Tom came, busy at my schoolbooks, and he looked at me and then at my father, and said, "Demsher, I want talk by myself."

Father gave me a glance. "Never mind the boy, Joe Tom. What are you making mystery about?"

Joe Tom had never acted like that before. He was about fifty then, a tall man in a red shirt, a pair of linsey-woolsey trousers all patched with different cloth, and moccasins of moose-hide; and a black mane of hair swept his shoulders. He pulled a small caribou-skin pouch from the breast of his shirt and from it poured a little heap into father's hand.

"What's this?" my father said.

"*Wis-ow-soo-le-a-wa,*" answered Joe Tom, looking at me. That is the Micmac for gold, and he thought I wouldn't understand; but I did. What I don't understand, even now, is how Joe Tom knew it was the stuff the white men talked about. Nobody in our part of the country had ever seen gold in the raw. But the Indians' fancy had long been caught by the talk, by the notion of something valuable lying about the woods, in the rocks and streams, that would buy all the things they'd never been able to buy, and all so simple—finders, keepers, like a legacy from the old splendid gods, and waiting all this time.



"Are you sure?" my father said, staring in his hand.

"Yuh."

"Then you'd better not tell anybody else, Joe Tom."

"Yuh."

"Is there more where this came from?"

"Some."

"A lot, Joe Tom?"

"Some."

Father poured the stuff back carefully, and Joe Tom put away the pouch in his shirt. He said no more; but it was as if he asked a question, and father knew, and was pondering the answer. My father walked over and fiddled with the big glass lamp on the parlour table, and then to the mantel, straightening the china dogs and vases, and the daguerreotype of himself and mother taken in Milltown; then he pushed his hands deep in his trouser pockets and rubbed his chin against his shoulder as if his beard itched, and stared at me under his brows, and I put my eyes down to my book, for he looked very stern.

I knew now what he was thinking. He was thinking there would be a flocking of miners and speculators and rumsellers and other outlandish people into our quiet district if the news got around, and he hated it. That had happened already, in many places in the province.

"The sensible thing, I suppose," he said slowly, "is to show me, or Judge Carron, next time he comes from Annapolis, or somebody else you can trust, where the stuff is. Have the land measured off and staked. Then get the government to proclaim this region a mining district, and file your claim. Then nobody can take it from you, Joe Tom."

The Indian shook his head solemnly and looked past father's shoulder. "Is bad luck, Demsher. Is bad luck show white people where is money."

I think that hurt father a bit. The Indians had always set us Devonshires a little apart from the rest of the whites. Stiffly, he said, "Then bring out the stuff, a little at a time, and I'll get Judge Carron to sell it for you. That way, no one'll suspect where it comes from. If you take that stuff into Milltown there'll be an uproar clean to Cape North." He was silent a moment; then he burst out, "I wish to God you'd never found it, Joe Tom!"

THEN began the queer transactions that went on, year after year, till the summer of '81. At intervals Joe Tom would vanish into the wilderness; and after a time, never less than a fortnight, he would sidle into our house with the little heavy pouch, looking mighty sly. Father was in the habit of sending Judge Carron a firkin of butter from time to time, and it was a simple matter to put the packet of gold in the top and nail on the head. Our bank was in the county town, down the river. Judge Carron lived at Annapolis, on the other side of the province. He took Joe Tom's gold to the bank there, and after a time the cash came by mail in the coach to Duncan's Corner, and my father passed it to Joe Tom. It might have gone on indefinitely but for two things.

One was that Joe Tom began to spend money. He started with a fine horse from Paddy Monahan, the New Kerry horse trader, and a fancy riding-wagon from the carriage factory in Milltown. Then he got a silver-mounted harness from somewhere. On fine Sundays he used to drive to mass at New Kerry, then on to Duncan's, with a plug hat down to his ears and a claw-hammer coat over his red shirt, and Lizzie beside him in her beaded squaw-cap and a black bombazine dress all sewn with brilliants and spangles; and Molly in the seat behind, in a white-girl's outfit that made you realize she was growing up, and mighty pretty, too. That was a sight to behold.

He bought a dozen chiming clocks and set them on shelves about his shabby hut; they never kept quite the same time, and about the quarter and the hour you would hear clocks striking in succession all over the house. He got an American organ, and until she grew bored with it, the girl Molly used to sit at the thing for an hour at a time, pedalling furiously and running her brown fingers up and down the keys. He fitted out Lizzie and the girl with all kinds of gaudy jewelry, and never wore less than three watches and chains himself; and

up in New Kerry he used to buy rum. He was canny about that, and would never drink in company, knowing well how *buk-ta-wich-ke* loosened the tongue. He took the stuff home and drank alone, and lay about the shack in a stupor for days at a time.

Father raged, but he couldn't do anything about it. If he quit handling the gold for Joe Tom, the Indian would take it to someone else, and the real turmoil would begin.

The second thing was that Lizzie died in '79, and Joe Tom and Molly went to Father O'Hearne in New Kerry and were married. That caused some talk amongst the women on the farms. Joe Tom was nearing sixty, though you mightn't have guessed it from his looks. The girl was only seventeen, with enough white in her blood to give her a fine-drawn look and a figure. But she took marriage with Joe Tom as a matter of course, apparently, and after some thought people said it was just as well. She was too pretty to be running around loose. They remembered how she came to be born. But things weren't quite as simple as all that. Four or five months after the marriage, Molly had a baby—a baby as white as you or me, and everybody knew it was Jim Ingleson's.

This Jim Ingleson was a worthless sort, about twenty-six, with curly yellow hair and bloodshot blue eyes and a weak wet mouth. He'd deserted a vessel loading lumber at Milltown a few years before. I fancy his captain was glad to see the last of him; but Jim walked the road through the woods to Duncan's Corner to make sure—forty miles, about as far as you can get from the sea in Nova Scotia—and begged and loafed from one farm to another. When the Corner got tired of him, he drifted on to the Irish at New Kerry, and from there by a natural law of gravity to the Indians at Fairy Lake. He had been around our part of the country for two years when Joe Tom's Molly gave birth to the white child. He was living then with the Maltees, a Micmac family who had a shack just a mile or two the other side of Joe Tom's.

All this was sorry enough. But now we heard rumors of Joe Tom's gold, and knew that poor easy Molly had talked as well as loved too much. The tale ran like a fire in grass. The old Indian's affluence had puzzled the countryside for years. Here was the answer, and every second man in the district was scouring stream-beds and chipping boulders and keeping an eye on Joe Tom.

ABOUT that time I went away to college. I'd done well in the country schools, and my mother was set on my going into the ministry. In those times every mother's ambition was to have a minister in the family—and there are worse, it seems to me. Anyhow, I didn't meet Joe Tom again till the next summer holidays. That meeting I shall never forget.

It was July and thunder weather, with nothing stirring, not even the locusts. Woolly clouds piled in high mountains in the sky, gray at the edges and blue in the distance, hung over the lake and the fields and the woods, and seemed to shut in the heat like the top of an oven. We sat on the stoop, gasping, and waiting for the rain. It came about two o'clock in the afternoon. The thunder after grumbling around all morning, came to a head with a crash, and a great splatter of lightning ripped down the sky, very bright against the darkness beyond the lake. Then we saw the rain coming in a dark line across the water, kicking up little red splashes in the dust of the road, then pattering, then drumming on the dry roof shingles. We couldn't see the lake for the downfall, and the road at the foot of our fields shone red like the wet clay of Fundy at low tide, and water chuckled down the gutter-spouts into the puncheons where mother caught washing water, and our ears were full of a great hiss, like all the steam in the world. Overhead the storm rattled and boomed, and father kept looking up at the lightning rods on the barn.

Suddenly there was a figure on the road. All the farms in our lake district sit on hillocks of deep soil—what geologists call drumlins—with swamps and woods between, like small cropped islands rising out of the forest.

Squire McGarrity

This figure came out of the woods from the west, a tall man, stooped, and running hard with short quick steps, toes in, the Indian way. As he turned in at our gate and came splashing up the steep lane that joined us to the lake road and the world, we saw it was Joe Tom. His mouth hung open, showing the black stumps of his old teeth, and the cords of his lean throat were like hard taut wires, and his dark eyes bulged as if pushed from within. We came to our feet in a hurry and ran out into the rain, crying out to know the matter, and as we came together in the downpour Joe Tom threw himself at my father's feet, gasping and choking and uttering little snatches of words that made no sense in English or Micmac. Father tried to get him on his feet, but he clung there to father's trouser legs, in the red mud of the lane.

"Demsher," gasped Joe Tom at last, "I killed a man. I killed Ingleson. Save me! Save me!" His voice rose to a scream on those last words, and you would have to know Indians to know the horror that filled Joe Tom.

The Indians had a great awe of the law. One or two had wandered into the county courthouse during spring or fall sessions, and came away with solemn tales. The notion of being dragged into that echoing place, to be stared at from all sides by white men in Sunday clothes, to be droned over by strangers in black gowns, with hands full of mysterious papers, to be faced day after day by that other stranger on the high dais, with his black gown, his immaculate white stock, and his face of an old tired eagle; and at the last to be taken out to the jail yard, with a rope about your neck, and hauled up to a beam and left to kick your life out—this was a horror that haunted the Indian folk. I suppose the whites had rubbed in the details pretty carefully, for their own sake, in the early days. So Joe Tom, who had never feared the death that waits in so many forms for woods folk, now lay in the pelting rain and begged my father for his life.

It was my mother who got Joe Tom indoors. She appeared quietly beside us and stooped, and put a hand on his shoulder. "Get up, Joe Tom!" she commanded sharply. "The idea—getting yourself all wet, at your age. Come into the house and stop all this nonsense."

We left him slumped in the old barrel chair in the kitchen, dripping water on the floor and watching mother as she went about her work, with the eyes of a terrified dog. Father and I hitched old Darby to the buggy and whipped his surprised hide all the way to Joe Tom's. We found Molly in a rocking chair by the stove, rocking, rocking, rocking, with a face like white stone, and the child clasped in her arms.

Jim Ingleson was stretched on the floor, staring with dead fish-eyes at the rough board ceiling. The top of his head near the brow was hollow where it should have been round, and blood still oozed slowly through his soiled yellow curls, though his heart was as dead as his eyes. In the woodbox behind the stove stood an old muzzle-loader that belonged to the Maltee boys, the stock bound with brass wire to hold an old split in the wood. Father sniffed the muzzle. It hadn't been fired, not recently anyway. He thrust the ramrod down the barrel and found it loaded, but there was no cap on the nipple. The butt had been whittled in a deep half-moon for the shoulder, the way the Indians liked a butt to fit, and one of those sharp wooden horns was plastered with blood and hair.

The roof of the shack leaked in sev-

eral places, and the drip-drip, loud in the awful silence, set my teeth on edge; but suddenly all the clocks began to chime, one after another, and the child howled.

THERE were two magistrates in the district. One was Mr. Craig at Duncan's Corner, a just man but rigid, a stern unbending man. The other was Squire McGarrity. Squire McGarrity was the great man of New Kerry, that settlement of happy-go-lucky Irish, that district of ramshackle farms and fine horses and pretty girls. He was stocky and red-cheeked and white-haired, with the impish Irish humour glinting in his little blue eyes, and he was the law in New Kerry. There were many tales of his rule. One was about a fellow who got a lawyer all the way from Milltown to plead his case in the Squire's court, which was the McGarrity parlour. Nobody had ever done such a thing, and the Squire was not pleased. The Squire made a point, and the lawyer objected. "That's not the law," said the lawyer.

"Young feller," said Squire McGarrity, "I am the magistrate in New Kerry, and I make the law to suit the case. Sit down. Your client is fined five dollars, and his lawyer is warned agin contempt av this court. God save the Queen."

So father and I took Joe Tom and Molly to Squire McGarrity, with the Maltee boys rattling along behind in their old buggy for witnesses. My mother looked after the baby. It didn't take very long. As soon as the Squire knew what happened, he looked in my father's eyes, and you saw something passing there, the talk of good men that needs no words.

The Maltee boys deposed that Jim Ingleson had borrowed their gun to go hunting, that he had been drinking some stuff he made in a keg, and that was all they knew.

"Not by a jug-full," snorted the Squire, "but let it go. Joe Tom, what's your story?"

Joe Tom's eyes never left my father's face.

Father said quietly, "Go on, Joe Tom. Tell the Squire everything."

I'll omit the slow hobbling testimony of Joe Tom, his quaint accent, his outbursts in Micmac whenever his English failed, his mixed-up tale of events that father and the Squire had to unscramble with kindly questions.

Briefly, it was what you know. Poor Molly was crazy about Ingleson, and thinking to please him she'd told about Joe Tom's source of wealth. Afterwards people declared that Ingleson had seduced her with that end in mind; but the man was incapable of looking so far ahead. Jim Ingleson was too worthless even to make a good villain.

What she couldn't tell him was the location. All Molly's wiles had failed to get that from Joe Tom. So at last, with a belly-full of Dutch courage and the borrowed gun—borrowed for what purpose no one but the dead man ever knew—Ingleson went to Joe Tom's, declared the child his, and Molly's heart as well. He had come to claim both, he said. The law would back him up, he

said. No Injun had the right to a half-white girl, and him old, and she seventeen at the time; the marriage was illegal. He was glib, was Ingleson, and the words he used sounded like law in the Indian's ears. Then the loafer offered a bargain that shocked Joe Tom and Molly alike. Show him where the gold was. Show him that, and he would give up all claim to Molly and the child. He would give Joe Tom a paper to that effect. A paper. The Indians had a great respect for paper.

Did Ingleson threaten him with the gun, the Squire wanted to know.

Joe Tom answered honestly, no, he couldn't say what happened. He said his head seemed to swell. He heard himself shouting *"Kesnukwon!"* Now the word for liar in Micmac is *booskeeksooa;* but when you want to call a man a particularly-vile-scoundrel-of-a-liar you say *"Kesnukwon!"*

At once they were struggling for the gun. Then Ingleson was lying on the floor, and Molly screaming that Joe Tom had killed her Jeem, a white man, and would suffer for it. That was all he could remember.

The Squire called on the girl to testify, but sullenly she refused, as if she knew the law.

"Well," said Squire McGarrity, with his jaw up and his brogue coming thick, "it's a very simple case, afther all. Here's a man, here's a spalpeen that gets himself dhrunk and goes out with a gun in the worst lightnin' storm we've had these ten years. There's trees struck right and left. There's Paddy Carrigan's barn burnt to the sod. There's the church hit, for all there's a lightnin'-rod on the steeple. There's Regan's struck, and quare damage, with a pot knocked to pieces on the stove and divil a thing else. For lightnin' is quare stuff, that can whip a man's boots off, and him with no more than pins-and-needles down the leg—and on the other hand killed John O'Dwyer in his bed, three years back, without a scorch on his nightshirt, and ould Tress beside him complainin' cuz his feet's so cold. The Lord giveth and the Lord taketh away, and I don't see what's wrong with sayin' a man died by act o' God. But some would object. So I'll put it that Jim Ingleson met his death by misadventure near Fairy Lake, Pine County, at two by first clock and wan-forty by the hindmost, in the afthernoon av the sixth av July, in this year eighteen-hundhred-and-eighty-wan, and may God have mercy on his soul. Case dismissed."

Whatever folk thought of the Squire's court, the district was well rid of a scamp, it was agreed. A few grumbled, and thereafter pointed out Joe Tom as a murderer unhanged; but these were submerged for the time being, by the gold rush.

IT BEGAN at New Kerry, where Joe Leahy found a nugget in a post-hole and uncovered what came to be known as the Leahy Vein. It was uncanny the way the news flew, in those days before rural telephones, in those days when railroads were still a-building, and you traveled by coasting schooner and then inland by coach over the rugged country roads.

Men and boys deserted the farms, leaving crops to the women, or to rot in the ground; and it was no time before promoters were on the spot, and syndicates formed, and shares sold near and far, and machinery and experienced hard-rock miners coming in from the States, and amateurs from all over the Maritimes and Newfoundland. Duncan's was the centre of attraction, for the Leahy Vein lay to the southwest of it, and Shea's Prospect Vein to the north, and southeast along the post road three mines worked the Bear Hole Lode. Soon that quiet village of Scots farmers had a population of strangers in knee boots and red shirts, with three hotels, a Miners' Hall, a big livery stable, seven bars and a brothel. The quiet dark-eyed Syrians came, and Hebrews, and started shops where you could buy anything from a revolver to a beaver hat, and the manager of the Leahy Mine built himself out of company funds a mansion that cost fifteen thousand dollars, a prodigious sum.

I could tell you tales that would sound like Bret Harte, and you would smile. But they're true. It happened.

A breath of Poker Flat in the Nova Scotia woods.

It lived ten years from first to last, but the boom was over in five. The old mining story—more money put into the ground than ever came out of it. The cost of mining those erratic and slender veins was terrific. They burnt a fortune in firewood alone, heating the boilers that ran the mine machinery, with an army of wood-cutters, Newfoundlanders, stripping the ridges for miles. Sometimes they struck another pocket like the one Leahy found, and hope flared up for a time. Then the cold truth sank in once more. And the deeper and colder the truth, the more men talked of Joe Tom and his mine. They believed he knew the mother lode, that Joe Tom's people had known it for centuries, and invented tales of a haunted lake to bar the road to it. The shores of Fairy Lake were scoured, and the old Indian graves desecrated, and you can still find, bush-choked, the pits and trenches they dug all over the wilderness.

The more unscrupulous began to pester Joe Tom, threatening "justice" for his "crime," and wheedling him with offers of partnership and protection. For a long time he had been watched whenever he stepped into the bush, and the Maltee boys, for their own ends, were amongst the spies. He dared not go near his "mine," wherever it was; but his grim Micmac humor led them many a merry dance in the wild country south and west of Fairy Lake. Eventually Molly grew tired of Joe Tom's poverty and ran off with a young Indian from Beaver River, who had come to work in the mines. No one in the lake country ever

ILLUSTRATED BY HAMILTON GREENE

Joe Tom plunged into one of these thickets, and we found ourselves in the green gloom of a root cave.

saw her or Jim Ingleson's child again. Old Joe Tom sat in his shack and brooded, and came now and again to my mother for something to eat; and my father went on with his farming, a sane man in Bedlam.

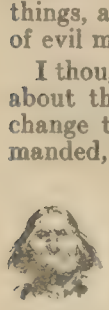
While this was going on I finished my studies and got a church in Cape Breton, and married a wife, and I didn't see Joe Tom again till the summer of '87. There was a guest at my father's; Donohue, the mining expert, brought in to write a post-mortem for the shareholders of the Leahy, and he went with me to Joe Tom's for the sake of the walk. Joe Tom had gone gray and shrivelled, as the Micmac men do when age strikes them at last, and walked with such a stoop that his big knotty hands hung to his knees. We talked for a bit. I didn't mention Molly, nor did he. He talked very little of anything; his English, always halting, seemed to have gone from him in his extreme age.

Just as we turned to go, he caught my arm and asked how long I planned to stay, calling me "Demsher" as he had always called my father.

"I leave in the morning," I said. It was pleasant to speak the tongue that was part of my childhood.

"A long time there is a stone in my heart," the old man said, "because of a thing hidden between thee and me. It makes a coldness, and it may be that if I show this thing-which-is-hidden my heart will be warm again. For I have done evil, and have an evil reward in all things, and am for a long time the prey of evil men."

I thought he intended some revelation about the Ingleson affair, and tried to change the subject quickly, but he demanded, "Come! We go!"



JOE TOM led the way across his pitiful fields (all choked with sorrel and quitch-grass, and the fences down) and into the woods. We travelled a long time, much of it through black-spruce swamps, partly dried in the summer heat and buzzing with mosquitoes under the melancholy mop-headed trees. I lost all sense of direction, but I knew we must be moving in some roundabout fashion, for it was impossible to go so far in a straight line without striking one of the rounded glacial drifts where the farms were.

We emerged into the sunlight, and looked across a strip of wild meadow and a small sluggish brook to a slope studded with old stumps. It was faintly familiar, and suddenly I knew it for the north pasture of our own farm. I had seen this brook and scrap of wild meadow in the hollow as a boy, but from the other side of the pasture fence. Why had Joe Tom led me here in this furtive and uncomfortable way?

On the edge of the swamp, where the land began to rise toward the pasture, the ground was a tangle of fallen trees. Some of these windfalls were very old, the trunks and branches gone to moss-covered dust; others were as new as last September's gales. It was one of those places where trees grow to a good size and then blow down for lack of solid anchorage, and in falling turn up a great disc of roots and earth and clutched stones, like a dirty wicker basket-lid on edge, ten, fifteen or even twenty feet high.

After a year or two, ferns sprout over the uprooted mass, and grass and small bushes, and the raw circular wound in the earth is hidden by the overhang of alders, which always seem to spring up about such a place and, perhaps, for just such a purpose.

Joe Tom plunged into one of these thickets, and we found ourselves in the green gloom of a root cave. Six men could have stood upright in it. A spring seeped out of the foot of the hill and trickled amongst the exposed stones of the floor, and there was a sort of bowl which once had been full of gravel, for we could see its former contents scattered along the back of the cave amongst the roots.

"Demsher," Joe Tom said, "this is thine. Gold was here, and I took it. See! It was in the little stones, in the sand."

"What's he say?" Donohue asked with impatience.

I said, "He found gold in this place."

"Umph!" The mining man dropped to hands and knees and went all round,

like a questing dog. There was a rusty shovel in a corner, and a rustier iron frying pan, Joe Tom's mining tools, unused for years. Donohue scooped some of the gravel into the pan and shook it industriously. After several pans, and still squatting on the ground, he looked up at me.

"Gold? Yes. He's pretty well cleaned it out, but there was a small pocket of nuggets and dust apparently. It came from that glacial drift where the farm sits, washed out by a stream under the ice-mass, back when the world was young. It means nothing. All these drumlins and kames contain a certain amount of gold, scraped off the outcrop in the ice age. If you dug the whole hill apart you might find another pocket or two; a thousand—maybe five thousand dollars' worth. But it'd cost you ten or twenty thousand before you were through. That's the curse of this whole district. Forget it. Let's get out of here before these confounded mosquitoes eat us alive."

Donohue led the way up to the pasture, but Joe Tom held me back for a moment, and his old eyes were anxious as they sought mine.

"Demsher, what says this man? Truly there is gold, much gold, the whole hill is gold? A little I have taken in my days of evil, but now that I have shown thee thy good fortune surely the evil goes from me?"

"Truly the hill is gold, Joe Tom. Thou hast but scratched it. Whatever thee took, that I give gladly from this my good fortune."

"And they will come now, the mining men?"

I shook my head. "More evil than good is in this gold. Like stinking meat, it is best covered with earth. If I give over my father's land to these manmoles, what then becomes of the crops, and the fruits, and the open door for the hungry? Guard thou thy tongue, as I guard mine. In time to come, when no harm can befall thee or me, or thy people and my people, then I shall tell of this gold."

That time has come.

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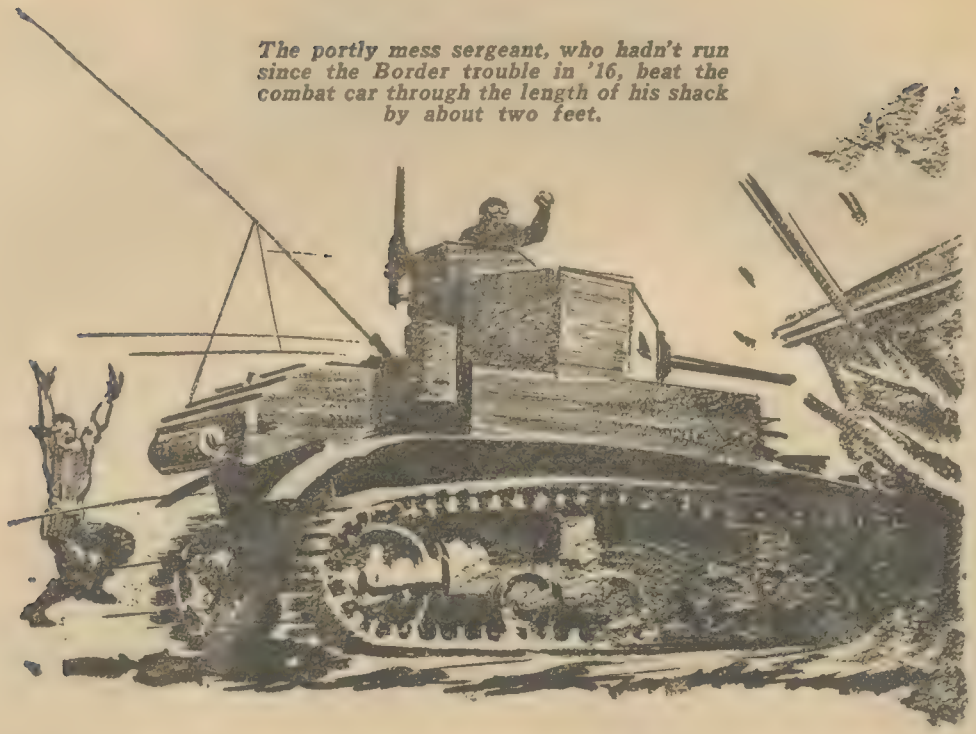

The portly mess sergeant, who hadn't run since the Border trouble in '16, beat the combat car through the length of his shack by about two feet.

TANKS AIN'T HORSES

By FREDERICK WILKINS

IT ISN'T of national importance, not at a time like this, but quite a few people wondered why a big weekly advertised those tank-action pictures and never printed them. There's not much being said about that now—so you might just say that this is a tale of the Old Army, the one some of you knew before billion dollar appropriations. That's because it's about Red and Fate, though it began no longer ago than day before yesterday, when the post railway hauled in long lines of flat cars and denim-clad troopers drove armored vehicles down the ramps.

A brass plate with crossed sabers on each turret indicated some relation to cavalry, but Red wasn't sure. He glanced down at the stables, then looked again at the olive-painted steel machines.

"Great balls of fire, Timmy, is that what we got to ride!"

"Beauties, aren't they, Red? Now we're really going to see some action."

The Old Man and the captain commanding the cadres from Knox were walking along the lines of machines, the younger officer explaining various points; every man in the regiment who could be there clustered around their new mounts.

"Worse'n a bunch of kids," Red grunted.

"Oh, stop beefin'. You should be proud we got selected for mechanization."

"Mechanization is a lot of tripe! Where I come from horses is used to ride, and we plows with them tractors." He jerked his thumb at one of the squatty, angry-looking combat cars.

"Come on, Red, let's take a look."

They joined the other troopers, who were having the time of their collective lives going over Uncle's latest collection of cast iron juggernauts.

THE N.C.O.'s from Knox looked with polite scorn on this last group of horsed relics and condescendingly displayed their knowledge. And the troopers, noted the disgusted Red, listened with open mouths to what the motor jockeys had to say. From the colonel down to the newest recruit they were caught in the spirit of something new. Except Red.

He stood on his bowed legs before the Old Man and looked at him with reproach in his eyes. "Begging the colonel's pardon, but is everybody going to ride in them things?"

"The entire regiment, Red," replied the colonel.

Now maybe a colonel has no business calling an enlisted man by his nickname, maybe. . . . But Red had set a new record on the saber course when only a recruit, back in the days when cavalrymen came complete with sabers and didn't see a machine gun once a month. The Old Man had won a new Stetson on that ride, and his memory was good. He was a bit Old Army, too.

Teach an old dog new tricks, he was thinking. "Yes, Red," he said aloud, "the entire regiment is to be mechanized: combat cars, armored cars, scout cars, motorcycles. That's my bus over there. What do you think of it?"

Red shook his head. "Begging the colonel's pardon, but I don't like it."

Timmy pulled him away. "Take it

easy, pal. Just because he calls you 'Red' don't mean you can run the outfit."

Red left them and wandered down to the stables and watched Agnes nosing in the hay. It was that way he reflected; you get a fine record and the Army rewards you by some assignment like a change to tanks. "This is getting to be one hell of a Army, Agnes." Little knowing what was ahead, she paid little attention, and he was so lost in gloom the second call for mess was sounding before he started to move.

There wasn't any relief in food. Timmy handed him a mimeographed sheaf of papers on the employment of armored cars, and everyone in the mess hall was shooting off his mouth about tanks.

"Red, look what I got from one of those Knox sergeants."

"Tripe!"

"No, listen, Red, we have a lot to learn. I'm goin' to wear stripes in this outfit."

Red began to read aloud, "Armored cars perform the distant reconnaissance of the regiment, often up to a hundred miles in advance of the combat cars." He looked at Timmy, his voice scornful. "A hundred miles—of all the tripe! Next thing you'll be tellin' me that nothin' can whip tanks—"

A bench scraped on the floor; the buzzing stopped, and the colonel was in on one of his lightning inspection trips. Stopping behind them, he noticed the sheets in Red's hand.

"Red, I'm mighty glad to see that you are taking this change this way. I was a little afraid you might hate to leave horses. You just keep on reading and thinking that nothing can whip tanks and we'll have the best mechanized regiment in the Army!"

The carrot top just sat there, after the Old Man had gone, and looked at Timmy; he pushed the pamphlets toward Timmy with his knife and muttered in Border Spanish and refused a second helping of dessert.

THEY started the tests and training next morning with a demonstration. Captain Andrews and the colonel were before a loud speaker; the regiment, by troops, was lined up on the drill field.

"We are to see the various types of combat vehicles of a mechanized cavalry regiment in action this morning," began the captain. "There is a course laid out here and in the woods so that you can get some idea of their mobility. First, the main striking vehicle, the combat car, or light tank, as it is known in the infantry."

The radial motor of the combat car began to groan and reached a full bellow, dropped down to a steady mutter; behind them a horse whinnied.

"I don't blame him," Red said. "I know how I would feel if some tin can got my job."

"Maybe you think they ain't," a trooper muttered.

"As a basis for comparison," continued the captain, "the colonel has directed me to have a mounted trooper accompany the car, demonstrating their relative mobility. This will be somewhat in the nature of a comparison"—he smiled—"as far as comparison is possible. Will Private Johnson saddle his mount and report here as quickly as possible."

Red jumped up. "That's me and Agnes! *Yipee!* Tanks ain't horses," he yelled back at them. "You watch!" Down in the stables he could hear the captain's voice booming through the loud speaker. "He'd better do a good job, Agnes, 'cause when we get through the Old Man will ship the lot of them back to Knox."

It was good to be up on Agnes, though she gave a shudder and balked when she saw the tank; Red kicked her forward and patted her neck and whispered in her ear. Beside the tank he had the course pointed out to him, ignoring the grinning sergeant in the turret.

"You know what he is riding, Casey," the sergeant screamed down to his driver. "A horse. Remember? Yeah, like in the Civil War."

Agnes tossed her head; Red muttered briefly and they were gone, leaving the tank behind. Then the motor rose to a full growl, and the stubby machine swung, tracks tossing gravel, and lumbered after them. Red spurred Agnes, glanced back, and led to the woods in a smooth gallop. They began to weave

among the trees. He glanced back again, the clatter of the tracks and the motor's roar loud in his ears. "Balls of fire!" he grunted. The tank was closed in, ready for action. The driver plowed down a row of scrub oak, snapped off a six inch tree trunk, smoothed down a row of bushes and almost climbed on Agnes' back.

"Agnes, get *goin'!*" And she was in a dead run.

Ahead of them a fence ambled along, a stout three feet of pine rails. Agnes took it easily, and Red heard them give a cheer back on the parade ground, heard the splintering crash as the tank knocked down a section wide enough for a column of fours to ride through. Another lap through the woods, around the markers. Red was giving her all the mare could stand; the tank driver kept level, swinging out every once in a while to snap down some tree.

"Show off," grunted Red. "Now, Agnes, *give!*"

She was beginning to puff and the foam was whitening along her flanks, but Agnes headed for the water slide with a will. Tank and mare hit the slide at the same time, went down together —and the tank landed flat and simply lifted the waters and engulfed Red and the mare, flung dirt in their faces, tossed back more gravel, shrieked and swarmed up the slide and vanished, leaving them half drowned in the middle of the pool.

Together they limped back to the post, Red seething and sodden, Agnes with her head low and equine tears in her eyes.

"We was robbed. . . ."

The driver looked from his compartment and leered in his best mechanized manner. "Just a fugitive from a glue pot," he heckled.

THAT just about settled the matter as far as the regiment was concerned. The next weeks dissolved into a blur of tank tracks, tactics, four wheel drives; scout cars scooted over the reservation; tanks gouged hunks of dirt from the protesting earth and flung dirt in Red's face, clogged his sensitive nostrils with fumes. No matter what he may have wished, he had to admit that the captain and his crew from Knox knew what they were doing; there was no question that they couldn't answer. They did a wonderful job of converting a horse regiment into an armored unit—and fast, for the word was speed. Tests and maneuvers were to be held within a month; there was talk of forming an independent armored division, maybe more; there was all kinds of talk in the air. The troopers took to it like ducks to water.

Except Red. "Tanks ain't horses. . . ."

Organization was changing; tactics were changing; material was being tested; everything was flux. And they had a month more for training before taking the field and seeing how far they had progressed and, incidentally, to test the anti-tank defenses of infantry units.

Red lived for that. "All I want is to get behind a fifty-caliber machine gun and pot me a couple o' tanks, even with just blanks—no, I want to get one of them new little cannons and blow them tanks wide apart!"

Not only his pride, but Agnes' as well, had suffered. She was developing something approaching an inferiority complex; a Freudian vet would have diagnosed her case as equine inhibitions. She seldom ate and was comforted only when Red was near, which was not often, as he spent his daylight hours enfogged in gasoline fumes and engulfed in armor plate. Every day brought the time of her departure nearer; already the first squadron's mounts had been shipped away to a proposed replacement center. The thought of some selectee mistreating Agnes made Red gnash his teeth.

There was plenty for everyone, jobs for all. Except Red. He didn't seem to find any of the positions of an armored regiment suited to his talents. For a time—one day to be exact—he was assigned to a motorcycle; he drove up and down the line of combat cars and handed messages to the platoon leaders in the turrets.

They started by 8:00; he could drive enough to remain on the machine by 9:01; long before 10:03 the novelty had worn off. Sometime around 11:07 he got the inspiration. He was a cavalryman—what did he know about clutches?

"Buddy, you sure busted hell outta this transmission," the mechanic said in wonder. "And look at this chain!"

"You can see how it is, sir," Red explained to his troop commander. "Them things ain't reliable. What we need is horses, Captain. A horse is man's best friend—"

"Those puddle jumpers are bad," his C. O. agreed. "You know I spent several years trying to learn how to ride one of the things—always did have a suppressed desire to tear one up. Just the same," he added thoughtfully, "Edwards is short a few men. I believe I'll shift you to the combat cars."

It didn't help much at that, being in a combat car.

"Besides," complained Red, "these is tanks. I seen them in the movies."

"Well, in the cavalry they are called combat cars."

"It don't make sense."

"It does to the Army," grunted the instructor, knowing all the time that it didn't.

Red banged his head. "Sardines," he complained.

"These machines are designed for combat, not comfort. Strap your belt and shut up."

There were days of gunnery—cowl guns and turret guns. Red found that what he knew about a light machine gun helped, but that hitting a target from a galloping combat car was about as simple as juggling ten oranges and scratching his back at the same time. Day by day the inexorable forces of steel closed about him; nor was there any relief at night; he would awaken from sleep with a shudder, finding himself bathed in perspiration, only to turn over and resume the chase. The chase was always the same: a giant tank chased him for miles and miles, finally dunking him in a pool of water, while Agnes stood by and tried vainly to aid him.

He might have stuck it out, had it not been for the tests covering mechanical proficiency.

"Look," he moaned to Timmy, "on a horse you got to know a few parts you can see, but not on them boiler-plate tractors!" He had a wild look. "You know what? Today that motor jockey shows us that this is a idler and a link—then we got to tear them things apart and find out what is *inside!*"

"Yeah, us, too. Fun, isn't it?"

Red gave him a disgusted look. "I'll get out though," he vowed. "Brains does it every time. Machines is dumb creatures, but man is intelle—uh—you just wait."

"Now look, Red, you aren't goin' over the hill?"

Red wouldn't say anything more but sat around and smiled and took three helpings of dessert that night, so Timmy knew something was in the air.

"I'M A changed man, Sergeant," he said next day. "I want to be the best driver in the regiment."

The instructor gave him a doubtful glance and mentally reviewed his record: a ruined motorcycle, mired scout car, water in the gas tank, absolute zero on mechanical ability.

"This lever is to go right; this one to the left," Red explained. "I use this here to put 'er into neutral. Tap on the right shoulder, turn right. Left shoulder, go left. Bang, bang on the head, stop. Middle of the back, faster."

"That's the spirit, Johnson. I knew you could do it if you tried."

"Thank you, Sergeant. It's all because you are such a good teacher."

"Oh, I'm only doing my job," the sergeant said modestly.

"No, you're real smart—pretty, too."

Like a file of metal ducks the combat cars followed the troop commander's machine; a flag was waved from the turret and the machines swung into echelon to the right; more flags and back into column. The column split into platoons.

"Balls of fire!" Red screamed. "She's runnin' wild!" He turned the combat car from echelon and bore down on the officers' mess.

It wasn't any use to yell, but the sergeant tried to shout instructions. He nearly kicked Red's shoulder loose trying to signal a right turn; but Red couldn't hear—or feel. Vainly the N.C. O. bellowed above the engine's roar: stop, turn right, go left. Red swung her around once, just to make it look good,

and headed full speed for the helpless frame building.

A startled K.P., alarmed by the noise, looked from a window. He had time to yell, "Run for your lives!" Then he and other white-clad orderlies were emerging from windows and doors with more speed than grace. The portly mess sergeant, who hadn't run since the Border trouble in '16, managed to beat the car through the length of the building by about two feet. Clear of death, he looked back in time to see his shrine give a splintery sigh and collapse in the middle. The combat car was still tearing across the parade ground, most of the roof supports of the mess hall draped about the turret.

There was quite a crowd gathered on that one. "He ruined my cake," moaned the mess sergeant. "It was angel food for Major Hardy's birthday. I'll kill him—"

"Just a moment, Sergeant," the Old Man said. "What in the name of all that's holy happened here?"

"You can see how it is, Colonel," Red said, getting in the first blow. "I ain't any good in them tanks. I ain't uh—I ain't temperaminted right. You should transfer—"

"You really can't blame him, sir," interrupted the sergeant. "The men still need a lot of practice."

"I understand that, Sergeant," the colonel grinned at the astonished Red. "Well, all's well that ends well, as Shakespeare said. I've been trying to get that damned shack condemned for two years, but Corps wouldn't spend the money. They *have* to build a new one now!"

That's the way things go—a long wait and lots of work and planning, then everything blows up at once.

FATE and liberal quantities of rain intervened next day. That was Saturday, and Monday the regiment was going to start maneuvers against a provisional horse troop and a battalion of infantry, to see what one could give and the other take. Fate: the orderly taking the list of names to make up the mounted troop dropped it. Rain: a large puddle right at his feet, so that the roster was thoroughly mud-coated. Being in a hurry and having other problems on his mind Captain Jennings mistook a mud-muddled name for Johnson, and Red was assigned to the troop. On such trifles do the fate of men and nations hang.

"Cripes, we're just guinea pigs!" a trooper complained. "A mechanized regiment'll run us ragged."

Red turned away from the bulletin board with a smile on his face. "Tanks ain't horses," he reminded the soldier. "You wait and see."

"I know they ain't, and I can hardly wait."

Official opinion was heavily in favor of the first trooper. The infantry battalion was merely to complete a Roman holiday. According to the umpires things would probably proceed thusly: the mounted troop would be sent out as a screen, making contact with the scout cars of the regiment; those who were not slain would flee back to the infantry and inform the gravel agitators that trouble was ahead. About the time the doughboys deployed and began setting up their guns the tanks would swarm down and roll them under. It shouldn't take over a day and a night, maybe less, even allowing for pursuit of the scattered remains. It would be some show; that's why Corps attached all the photographers and reporters to the colonel's staff.

Sunday night everything was under control, except the weather. About five minutes after midnight umpires informed each commander that they could start, though about all that could start in that weather was a duck convoy. Red was attempting to keep dry in a soggy pup tent. Whish—a bucket full blew in through the slickers tied across the open front, and a small trickle had ambitions to grow into a river and flood them from the rear.

"This is sure swell," he said cheerily to Timmy.

"Comfortable, too. Why did they have to assign me to this lousy makeshift outfit. I bet those guys in the regiment are nice and dry in their tanks and trucks and scout cars."

"Maybe so, but wait till they try driv-

ing them through that goo in the morning." He wiped the water from his face and chuckled.

TWENTY miles southward the colonel was looking at his map, his unit commanders and staff about him. "For purposes of realism, gentlemen, we will assume that we are the advance elements of an invading force. Weak enemy detachments are believed to be in this area—about there. Our mission is to penetrate Shelby Forest and take the defile through Higgins Ridge and the bridge just beyond." There was a craning of necks and much pencil scratching.

And twenty miles to the north a major of infantry and a cavalry captain were trying to keep the rain from running down their necks and decide what to do when dawn and the tanks came. They knew enough of the situation to know that they were to be a burnt offering for a few newsreel cameramen.

"If we can get inside the woods here and hold the cut through Higgins we can at least make it hard on their follow-up troops," the little major decided. "They won't have it so easy in this mud."

"Yes, sir. I'd suggest that my troop be sent ahead. We can screen you and get inside the woods and set up road blocks and maybe hold them long enough for you to reach the defile and possibly the woods."

Daylight was a sad affair of mud and mist. Red saddled Agnes and gave her a reassuring pat. "Our day is come, old girl. Revenge is gonna be sweet." She was an understanding mare and had a determined look in her eye.

But Timmy gave him a sour look. "Your day has come all right," he retorted, "but there won't be much revenge—not with this bunch."

Captain Jennings had been given the leavings of the regiment; in addition he had collected everything not nailed down that might hamper an armored advance: axes for felling trees, flour sacks for grenades, smoke pots for mines and two .50-caliber anti-tank machine guns, but he didn't have any illusions. Being long in the Army and thus a philosopher, he decided he would do the best he could.

"Balls of fire!" Red gloated as they passed the infantry bivouac area. Weapon carriers were slipping and sliding in the mud, each truck trailing an anti-tank gun. "Boy, just wait!"

"Yeah—six guns and sixty tanks. . ."

The doughboys were stringing out in long lines along the road, rifles slung, their clothing molded to their bodies. At a trot the troop passed down the companies, then the deployed advance guard. By now it was light enough to see that the road was washed out in spots, the fields a bog.

"See how easy we take it," Red called. "No combat car will do like these horses."

"Wait and see, oat-burner."

An umpire rode with them and chatted with the troop commander. "We won't need any umpire to decide who won this war," Timmy said.

"I'll say we won't," agreed Red.

DEEP within the woods an hour later, Captain Jennings and his seventy men set about providing the most disagreeable welcome possible for the mechanized regiment. At a sharp bend in the road, where the trees were thick and near the trail, he had one squad pile logs on the curve away from the enemy; the barrier was invisible until a driver rounded the corner and banged against it. The squad members hid their horses and set up a light machine gun to cover the road block and planted mines where vehicles would try to slip off the road and circle the obstacle. The other trail was blocked and covered with an anti-tank machine gun.

Red and Timmy and the rest of another squad were scattered along the forward edge of the forest, watching for the first scouting units of the enemy.

"What are we this time, Timmy?"

"We're 'Blues' and they're 'Browns.'"

"Listen—hear that?"

Red grinned smugly from behind his tree. "Yep. Motorcycle. You couldn't hear a horse a mile away like that. Let me slip out and pot him."

He went back and drew his rifle from the boot and slid into a small draw and

was gone; after a time they could see his helmet briefly in some bushes. There were two of the scouts on the road, riding from cover to cover, their sub-machine guns balanced in a way that meant business.

Bang! Bang! There was the smell of powder and the smoke from the blanks was being blown away. "Well, you guys is dead," Red said with satisfaction.

After some polite swearing they admitted the fact and rode their machines into the field beside the road, where they promptly bogged down.

"Say, corporal, look—if we could get them other guys back—"

"Get back, you guys!" called the squad leader. Down the road the sound of motors could be heard. "That's their scout cars."

The driver was taking it slow; standing up and using his glasses, the commander of the car was wondering why his scouts hadn't come back and if that was firing he had heard; then he saw them beside the road.

"Say, you find anything?"

"I dunno, Lieutenant. We been dead ten minutes."

Just then Red heaved a flour sack grenade and hit the officer on the ear; Timmy and another trooper had eased around and fired a half dozen shots at the crew; another grenade landed in the back of the machine.

"Out of action! Out of action!" yelled the umpire.

"It's a Blue trick," argued the commander.

"It is my decision that you were bombed and taken by surprise," stated the umpire, fixing him with the eye that makes even generals leave the field.

"The car ain't destroyed is it, sir?" Red asked.

"No, I'd think that it could still operate—though the crew are casualties and the guns out of action."

"Get down then," directed Red, a look of joy on his freckled face. "Our time is come."

"Come on outta there," commanded the corporal. "Those other cars heard the shooting; they're just the other side of the hill. Hear 'em?"

"Look, we all get in an' Timmy drives. When them others come we start across the field and signal for them to follow."

"We'll get stuck out there, didn't you see what—" He looked at Red. "O.K., take their caps and hide these helmets of ours."

They took the overseas caps of the protesting Browns and climbed in the back of the car; Red gave a wild "enemy in sight" signal as the first scout car crept around the bend, and they bounced across the field. The tires whined and slipped and there was the smell of freshly fried rubber; behind them the other two cars turned to the right and followed, their gunners alert and watching the edge of the woods.

"Head for them woods," Red called down to Timmy.

They never made it; a softer spot simply engulfed the car; a long groaning and slipping and the body rested flat on the ground.

"Out!" yelled the corporal. "Get in the woods and back on our horses."

Behind them the first car tried to come to their assistance and bogged down, then the other. By the time the Browns decided that all was not as it should be the cavalrymen were gone in the woods, the scout cars were hopelessly mired and Red was having the time of his life.

"Four wheel drive," he hummed, "six wheel mud." He mounted Agnes and swung through the trees behind the others. "Mechanized forces is sensitive to terrain," he said, quoting his instructor. "They also stink."

THE COLONEL was getting warm, from the sun and from the radio, to say nothing of several gentlemen from the Fourth Estate who kept asking questions like, "When are we going to murder those Blues?"

Bogged down in the field, his scout cars had radioed back what had happened; there wasn't much that they could tell about the size of the enemy forces. On the other flank his scouts and scout cars had shoved into the woods on the creek trail and been rather roughly handled, only a getaway man scooting rearward and informing the colonel that his advance feelers had been

nipped off. In assembly areas, his combat cars were waiting for the word, though having a rough time in the mud.

"When can I get some action pictures, Colonel?"

"Please, gentlemen," he begged. "This is war—or almost—and things are confused." He studied his maps again. "Knock off my scout cars, huh. Wait'll I throw in my tanks."

He wasn't quite sure where he was going to throw them; though there wasn't much choice, outside of the two roads and the trail through the forest. It seemed that most of the infantry had reached the shelter of Higgins Ridge and even the woods, and he knew that it must have been the cavalry troop that had sucked in his advance elements. So he simply got mad and started three tank columns banging down the roads.

"You'll soon have some pictures, gentlemen. Real action shots!"

"I HEAR 'em comin'," Red said.

"Yeah. Wonder what held 'em up?"

They began galloping towards the rear. "Mud," grunted Red. "Pure ole mud."

The corporal was blowing his whistle in long blasts, the shrill notes echoing throughout the forest; other blasts shrieked in reply, as the warning was carried ahead of their running mounts. Shortly the calm of the woods was again shattered, this time for good. Tank tracks and engines disturbed the forest peace; blanks were fired, men yelled, smoke pots went off. Three separate little battles broke out when the heads of the columns smashed into the road blocks. The leading tank on the main road set off a mine and was waved out of action; the gun knocked out another; one was bogged down. Then the full force of the column crashed in and put the gun and crew out and began lunging at the road block.

Red, Timmy and the corporal were joined by several infantrymen. "Where you guys from?" the corporal asked.

"We got separated when those tanks got through on the left and split up our outfit."

"Well, they can't get through here until they knock out that block, and they can't do that without gettin' down and doin' it by hand."

"We'll scatter out and snipe them when they open up and come down," the squad leader decided. "You guys got any of those flour sacks left? We'll try to throw them inside the turrets when they open up."

After several more bangings at the log barrier the leading tank displayed a flag; a man's head popped up and looked around; the anti-aircraft machine gun on the tank was swung around to cover any hidden enemy troops. Finally the silence satisfied him; he signaled again, and turrets down the line opened and the crews of the first platoon dismounted and went forward to remove the staked logs. Again the blanks shattered the silence; flour bags banged against the open turrets.

"This sure is fun," Red called above the clatter of machine gun fire from the remaining tanks. "How many we got so far?"

"Look out from the rear there, Red!"

The trees were being shoved down; behind them they saw two tanks that had slipped in from the rear. They dissolved in the woods, as they had been doing all afternoon, and left the tank crews, shooting empty brush heaps.

"I guess they finally got by," Red called.

Down the road the clatter of tracks was commencing again; motors were roaring; there was an occasional popping of blanks. Twice they came upon small groups of infantry and saw several mounted troopers.

"I wonder where the rest of the troop is?"

There wasn't much troop left; one infantry company had lost thirty percent and another twenty, but they were still in the fight, though scattered; the anti-tank guns in the forest were out of action, but the afternoon was well along and what was left of the battalion was dug in on Higgins Ridge, guns sighted and mines planted. His bogged-down scout cars hauled clear, the colonel had discovered that Higgins Ridge was going to be a tough nut to crack. He lost two

cars just finding this much out, and he was a long way from morning and full gas tanks.

"When do we smash those fellows on the hill there, Colonel?"

"Shortly, gentlemen, shortly." Already he had lost twenty percent of his tanks cleaning out the road blocks and anti-tank nests. "We must reorganize and refuel first."

THE umpires were still running about and waving flags and trying to keep the thing from turning into a real war. Several determined doughboys lurked alongside the road and shoved pine logs in the tank tracks of two unwary machines; discovered, they scattered and went in search of another tank. That made two casualties that didn't have to be simulated.

Red shattered an empty bottle against a turret and the disgusted crew chased him for a mile before losing him among the trees.

"They was all dead," he groused. "I hit 'em with a Molly Toff cocktail."

"What's that, Red?"

"I ain't sure, but I think it was some dame who was always burnin' up tanks."

The two troopers halted their weary mounts in a small clearing. "What do we do now, Red?"

"Oh, we ain't begun to fight."

"Listen, you may be Patrick Henry to you, but that ain't getting us back to the troop and away from these tanks. Say, they seem to be comin' back."

So you might say that the rain, having played its part, retired and Fate herewith stuck in her big foot for the last time. A tank troop, returning to the shelter of the woods, ran into them; there was a wild flurry, and they scattered like birds under a shotgun blast. Red swung to the right and galloped Agnes almost atop another group.

"They seem to be all coming back and stoppin', Agnes." He swung further away from the road and made a wide circle rearward, planning to get behind them and come out of the woods near the ridge.

Fifteen minutes later he heard voices and the sound of truck motors. "Hurry up, men, we have to work fast."

Dismounting, he left Agnes and crawled through the bushes, tugging his rifle. In a clearing denim-clad troopers were filling gas tins from a tank truck and piling them up for others to carry to cargo trucks.

"Great balls of fire!" whispered Red. "So that's why they was all comin' back —they're about out of gas."

To one side the regimental supply officer was pointing out locations to the

HAPPY MURDER TO YOU!

It was Joe Maddox' birthday and the big bookie was reaping a golden harvest of thousand-dollar bills, as little tokens of esteem, from his steady customers. It was a "grand" birthday indeed—until the bland Buddha of the hangtails began to suspect he was handling murder money. Then Tropical Park got as "hot" as those gratis grand notes. It's T. T. FLYNN'S latest Mr. Maddox novelette.

Death Is From Hunger brings back Cash Wale and Sailor Duffy in another of PETER PAIGE'S hardboiled corpse parades. The first cadaver in the case is that of Bowery Bess—"Dead from starvation," is the medical examiner's verdict. But the pint-sized private peep puts his nose to the kill-trail. Hadn't he seen the old she-hobo stow away a hearty meal just three hours earlier?

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drivers and calling for his men to work faster. Had he neglected his map for a moment and been able to see through a brush pile he would have seen a sweaty and mud-caked trooper easing his rifle into firing position.

Bang! There was that first excited rush when men are fired upon without warning; then rifles were hauled from the truck and fired in all directions.

Red stood up and came across to the officer. "You're all out of action," he said saluting. "Sir, I just blew up all that gas there."

There wasn't much use to argue—not with two flour sack grenades among the gasoline cans. "Shot holes in them, then threw the grenades," explained Red. "Blew it all up."

"He can't do that, sir. We have to get this gas up so the tanks can go on."

"He just did it, Sergeant. They won't use any of *this* gas."

THE colonel was getting sick of the cameraman. "When do I get some pictures of us annihilating them guys on the hill, Colonel?"

"Take some pictures of them in assembly areas. See, right out there. You won't have any blurred shots then."

"I don't wanna," the photographer said. "I want 'em to go."

Deep within himself the colonel groaned and waved a message blank in the air. "They're not going to go," he shouted. "They're finished, through! No gas," and he almost sobbed. "A whole regiment out of gas because of one bow-legged cavalryman."

"Yeah? Is that why we been sitting here all afternoon with them guys waving the flags?"

"You might say that was a contributing factor," the Old Man grunted.

That's how come the photographer never got any action shots and the colonel never found out how many tanks he would have lost forcing the defile. Which is also how Red happened to walk Agnes through fifty stalled tanks and stop before his instructor.

"*Tsh, tsh,*" Red clucked, "just a fugitive from a can opener." A carmine glow mounted the sergeant's neck and seeped inside his crash helmet. Agnes swished her tail and walked on, and some of them swear she grinned. About ten minutes later the little major found out what had happened and swarmed down with what was left of his battalion and captured the entire lot.

—He's not with them any more, Red that is. The colonel decided that maybe he wasn't constitutionally suited to mechanization and approved his transfer to Bliss. You can see him any time you watch the cavalry units there. Be careful what you say about armored forces, though.

"That's O. K.," he says when you are way out on a limb, "but did you ever hear of a horse runnin' outta gas?"

DECORATION BY LYNN BOGUE HUNT

KANGAROO?

When Captain Cook was sailing round, to find whatever could be found,
He chanced upon the Southern Hemisphere;
Docking his boat, he went ashore, where bushmen swarmed around galore,
And showed him sights unquestionably queer.

One day they brought into his view a quadruped completely new,
And one of very fanciful design;
"I say, old chap," the captain cried, taking the bushman chief aside,
"What is that thing? A deuced queer outline!"

The bushman shook his woolly head, and "Kangaroo?" politely said,
(A rough translation is "What did you say?")
But Cook replied with bow polite, and murmured, "Kangaroo! Oh, quite!"
And that is what the creature's called today.

—Cris

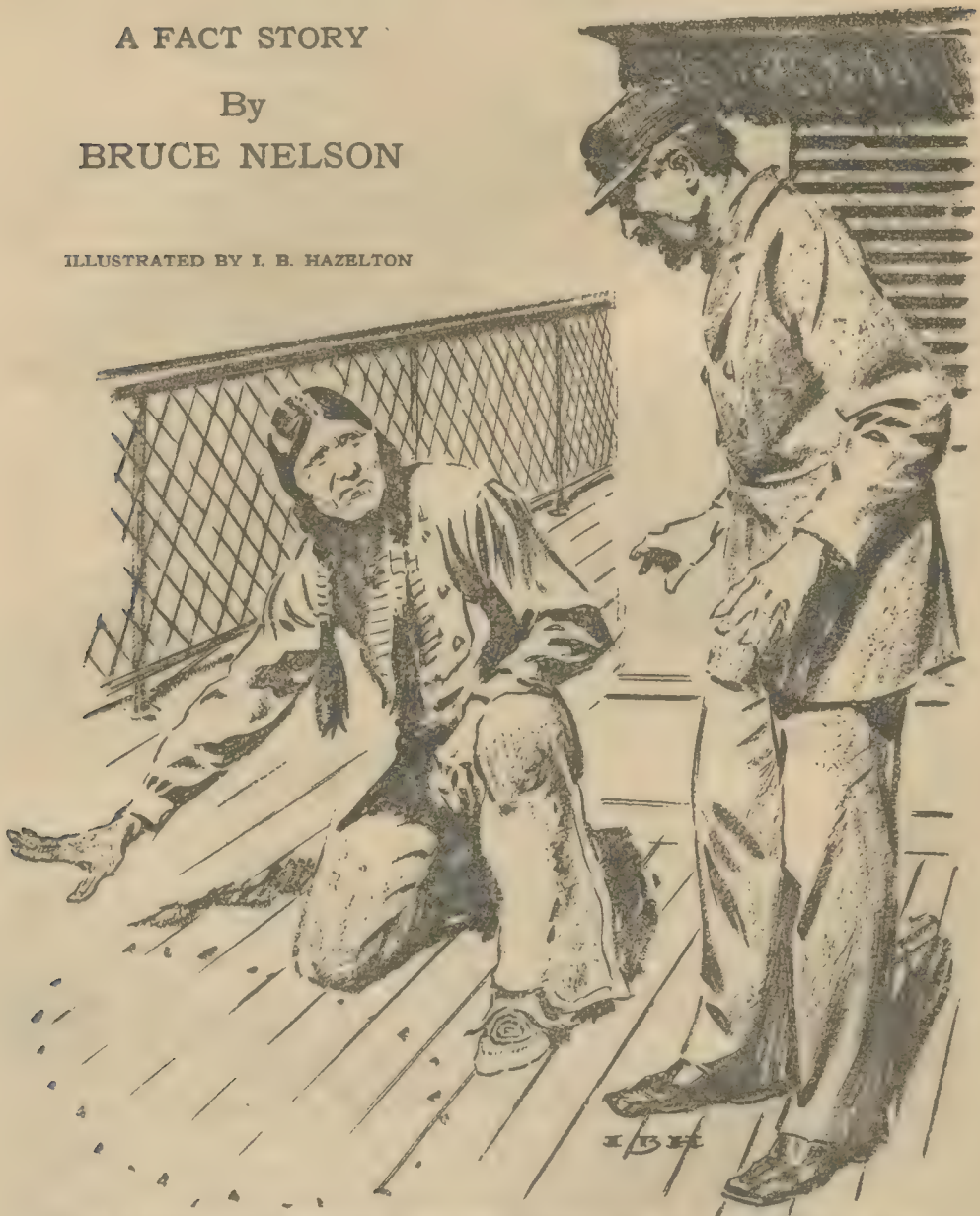
SCALP SCOOP

A FACT STORY

By

BRUCE NELSON

ILLUSTRATED BY I. B. HAZELTON



With a sweep of his hand the Crow scout brushed out the inner group of dots.

THE river steamer *Far West* bucked in the yellow current and tugged at her moorings. It was in the sultry month of June, 1876; and she had nosed her way to the mouth of the Little Big Horn, to await news of the great battle being fought on the wild Montana prairies fifteen miles inland.

Captain Grant Marsh, skipper of the *Far West,* paced the deck and cursed the delay of the long-awaited courier. The hot wind of the last few days had borne to his ears, now and then, the distant crepitation of rifle fire; but there

had been no word from the commanders. As Marsh stared out impatiently over the hazy prairies, the tangled growth at the stream's edge parted suddenly. A lathered, plunging pony slid to his haunches on the river bank, as the rider jerked him to a brutal stop and signaled frantically that he wished to board the vessel. It was a Crow scout, in the last stages of exhaustion.

On deck, the Indian squatted and drew on the clean white boards a group of dots. Then, looking up at Marsh, he spoke the Crow word for "White Men." Marsh nodded to indicate that he understood. Around the group of dots the Indian traced a second group, which he labeled with the word for "Sioux." Again the captain nodded.

The scout leaned forward, and with a dramatic sweep of his hand brushed out the inner group of dots, while Captain Marsh gasped in horror and disbelief. But the scout's pantomime drama had been true. And in that primitive fashion the story of the greatest military disaster in the history of the American West was first reported—the obliteration of Custer and his entire immediate command at the Battle of the Little Big Horn.

THE nearest telegraph wire that could be reached by boat was at Bismarck, Dakota territory, 710 miles away. Marsh's steamer, the *Far West,* was a supply ship for the United States troops which had set out from Fort Abraham Lincoln six weeks before on their "punitive expedition" against the roving Sioux. It became Marsh's duty, now, to carry back to the fort the wounded of Major Reno's command; and to acquaint the world with what Poet James Foley has called "for stark tragedy, horror and surprise, perhaps the greatest news story ever flashed over a telegraph wire to a stunned and stricken country in the history of the United States."

But it was more than that, too. In the annals of American journalism the Custer story is unique as an unparalleled example of the newspaper scoop. For tremendous and sensational as the story was, a curious chain of circumstances first gave it exclusively to the famous *New York Herald*—while Eastern readers mobbed newsstands, and rival editors tore their hair in futile anguish. But the day of spot-news broadcasts had not yet arrived. And other papers were forced to await the tardy War Office communiques in order to learn what had happened that sweltering afternoon in the valley of the Little Big Horn.*

There was but one accredited newspaper correspondent authorized to accompany the expedition—Colonel C. A. Lounsberry of Bismarck, editor of the *Bismarck Tribune* and special correspondent for James Gordon Bennett of the *New York Herald.* Illness in Colonel Lounsberry's family had prevented him, at the last moment, from accompanying the expedition on its fatal errand; and, incidentally, saved him to record for posterity the account of that dramatic military debacle.

In his place, Lounsberry sent Mark Kellogg, a young employee of his, who knew much of Indians and frontier warfare. "Man-who-M a k e s-the-P a p e r-Talk," Kellogg was called by the admiring Sioux, in the picturesque imagery of their own tongue. For to the Indians the art of writing was a source of constant wonder.

"I saw General George A. Custer as he marched to his last battle," Colonel Lounsberry wrote later. "Accompanying him was Mark Kellogg, bearing my commission from the *New York Herald,* who rode the horse that had been provided for me, and who wore the belt I had worn in the Civil War, which was stained with my blood. . . ." It was to be stained again, and with blood other than Lounsberry's, before many more weeks had passed.

It was the twenty-first of June when Generals Gibbon, Terry and Custer held a council of war aboard Captain Marsh's

*Editor's note: This is not the story of Custer's engagement at the Little Big Horn but an account of the news scoop of the battle and the way it was handled. Millions of words have been written, pro and con, about the fight itself and Custer's responsibility or irresponsibility at the scene of the tragedy. The controversy is familiar to most readers and in "Charger on a Stricken Field," which we published a few months ago in these pages, Fairfax Downey gave us a lucid picture of the "Last Stand." That article forms a chapter in his current book, "Indian Fighting Army" and anyone who cares to refresh his memory of the events leading up to the battle and of the fatal fight will find it valuable re-reading.

supply steamer, the *Far West.* The strategy of the enveloping movement was threshed out among them and Marsh was ordered to take his vessel to the mouth of the Little Big Horn and await further orders there. The plan was clear. It was the afternoon of the twenty-second when "Yellow Hair" and his Seventh Cavalry cantered off over the tawny prairies into the pages of history.

Just five days later—the twenty-seventh of June—the Crow scout, Curley, almost inarticulate from the horrors he had witnessed, brought to Captain Marsh and the *Far West* the dramatic report of Custer's fate. Marsh and the other officers on the boat at first refused to credit his story. But later in the day, as scouts from Gibbon's command arrived at the boat with instructions to make her ready for the race to Fort Abraham Lincoln, the great disaster was confirmed.

Gibbon's men, arriving two days too late for the battle, had come to the rescue of the beleaguered Major Reno's remnant of Custer's split command, and had driven off the Sioux. Late that afternoon, they had come upon the shambles of the Custer battle field. Even hardened frontier veterans of Gibbon's command were sickened at the sight that met their eyes. Despite the ravages wrought by three days of broiling sun, they could read on the swollen, mutilated corpses the marks of the Red Man's savage hand.

In a gully nearby, his "clay-bank sorrel" hide freckled with bullet holes and bristling with arrows like a pincushion, the silent men of Gibbon's column found Captain Keogh's horse, "Comanche"—sole survivor of the five gallant troops that had followed "Yellow Hair" into battle.

Gibbon's troopers rescued the half-dead animal, did a hurried job of partially-burying the fallen men, and hastened back to Reno's tattered company of wounded and exhausted survivors. It was slow and painstaking labor, the carrying of the wounded over the rough terrain to Marsh's vessel. Almost all the horses had been killed; and the work was done by hand, the men gritting their teeth grimly as they jolted over the twisted earth in stretchers improvised from the hides of dead horses. Captain Marsh, in the meantime, loaded fuel and turned the *Far West,* as best he could, into a floating field hospital.

Great beds of prairie grass, covered with tarpaulins, were strewn over the deck; medicine chests were attached to the rail around the vessel, ready for the surgeons' instant use. In the stern, a place was made for the suffering horse, "Comanche." By the evening of July third everything was in readiness.

Just as Marsh was preparing to cast off, General Terry sent a message requesting the captain to come to his cabin. Marsh, describing the incident later, declared he had never seen the unemotional Terry so deeply shaken.

"Captain," he told Marsh, "you are about to start on a trip with fifty-two wounded men on your boat. This is a bad river to navigate and accidents are likely to happen. I wish to ask of you that you use all the skill you possess, all the caution you can command, to make the journey safely. You have on board the most precious cargo a boat ever carried. Every soldier here who is suffering with wounds is the victim of a terrible blunder; a sad and terrible blunder."

Thus General Terry, on "Yellow Hair's" last and most sensational bid for fame. Terry was too much the professional officer and gentleman to condemn Custer publicly; but to Captain Marsh he spoke the bitter truth; and Marsh's biographer has recorded it for us in the story of the captain's life.

THE heroic exploit of Captain Marsh and the men of the *Far West* has never been given due credit in our histories, overshadowed as it was by the more sensational story of Custer and his regiment. But among rivermen, who know the horrors of exploding boilers and unseen snags that can rip the guts out of the strongest vessel, Marsh's epic race has become a byword.

Down the narrow Big Horn, through the tortuous Yellowstone, and into the swollen yellow Missouri Captain Marsh

By smoke signals the Indians had scooped the Herald.

hurled his throbbing craft, laden with wounded and dying men. It was the evening of July 3 when the *Far West* weighed anchor in the Big Horn and eleven o'clock on the night of July 5 when she moored at Bismarck 710 miles away—an average of almost 350 miles a day on partially strange and unexplored rivers! For Marsh had been the first pilot to push as far as the mouth of the Little Big Horn.

It was a record unequalled on the Missouri to this day; and a run that rivalled the classic Mississippi stories of the *Natchez* and the *Robert E. Lee*. But most sensational of all, he brought to Bismarck and to Fort Abraham Lincoln a story that was to go down in history as the most dramatic of the decade; and that was to give to the *New York Herald* a scoop unprecedented in journalistic annals.

Colonel Lounsberry, editor of the *Bismarck Tribune*, and the *Herald's* correspondent, was routed out of bed by Captain Marsh and the surviving officers. His first questions were of the fate of "Man-who-M a k e s-the-Paper-Talk," young Mark Kellogg, the reporter Lounsberry had sent in place of himself. Silently, one of the officers handed him a pouch that had been picked up on the battle field beside Kellogg's body. It was his dispatch case, filled with notes up to the time of the battle. Even in death, his friendship with the Sioux had served him well. For of all the unnumbered bodies, those of "Yellow Hair" and of "Man-who-Makes-the-Paper-Talk" were among the few left unscalped and unmolested. His notes were intact.

There were reports to be dispatched to the War Office at Washington; and Lounsberry, realizing that he had one of the great exclusive stories of all time, waited impatiently for Terry's official dispatches to be filed over the one wire to the East. Then, with the officers to aid him in the preparation of the necessary factual background, Lounsberry fell to work. Aided by the town's only two telegraphers and his own two printers, he began the composition of a 50,000-word story that was to galvanize the editorial staffs of the nation, madden the War Department, and seal forever the fate of the unfortunate Sioux.

At that time, an individual sender could monopolize the single direct wire from Bismarck to St. Paul, as long as he was able to keep sending continuously. And, of course, provided he could pay the tolls. While the officers and men poured the dramatic details into his ears, Colonel Lounsberry whipped them into narrative form and sent the story crackling out over the wire to the *New York Herald*.

When the telegraphers ran short of copy, now and then, the sweating colonel tossed them a Bible, with instructions to start anywhere and keep the wire clear until he could catch up again. All through the night and into the next afternoon he labored at his tremendous task. Twenty-four hours later, when the telegraph operators staggered to their feet cramped and drunken with fatigue, the *Herald's* press tolls were in excess of $3,000 and the St. Paul offices were begging for mercy. But the *Herald* had its scoop. And horrified readers on the Atlantic seaboard were clamoring for vengeance against the Sioux.

THE story fell in the East like a bombshell. It had been a week of celebration the like of which America had not seen for many a year. At the great Centen-

nial Exposition in Philadelphia, and in a thousand other American cities, citizens were commemorating the one-hundredth anniversary of the nation's founding. Now the "Boy General With the Golden Locks," the darling of Civil War days, had been done to death with all his men on the banks of the Little Big Horn. It was incredible! The dramatic details captured the popular imagination as few events have done before or since; and the news of the tragedy infuriated the public to fever pitch.

Colonel Lounsberry's story, delayed in part at St. Paul, first broke in the *Herald* on July 6. On that same date, several garbled rumors—giving the victory to Custer—cropped up in Utah and Montana papers. These had been brought overland by runners; and some of them received brief bulletin mention in a few Eastern papers. Then, to add to the *Herald's* extraordinary stroke of good luck, General Sheridan issued a denial of the story:

"It comes without any marks of credence; it does not come to Headquarters; it does not come to the leading papers from special correspondents; it is not given to the press for telegraphing," declared Sheridan. Such stories, he added, "are to be carefully considered."

Frightened by the denial, other Eastern papers avoided the story; while the *Herald,* pinning its faith in Lounsberry's reportorial integrity, continued on July 7 and 8 to print fourteen-column accounts of the disaster. And for days, the *Herald* and the *Bismarck Tribune,* one in the East and the other in the far West, were the only papers to carry complete and factual accounts of the battle.

After the Sheridan statement, other editors refused to credit the story—some of them going so far as to poke fun at the *Herald* for being made the victim of a hoax—a fact which served only to enhance the scoop when the War Department finally confirmed it. In the Yellowstone country, issues of the first *Tribune* extra sold for a dollar a copy; while in the East, readers clamored at newsstands for copies of the *Herald.*

From the yellowed files of the *Tribune* and the *Herald,* to say nothing of the millions of words that have been since written of the fate of Custer and his men, it is not difficult to re-construct today the tragedy of that June afternoon on the green, sloping hills known to the Sioux as the "Greasy Grass." From Reno and his men we have most of the story of what took place after Custer and his Seventh Cavalry left General Terry on the twenty-second of June. It is not necessary to recapitulate the story of the battle itself here.

FROM the standpoint of a news story, the Custer scoop has one esoteric facet that stands out above all others. For several days before Captain Marsh's steamer, the *Far West,* brought the news into Bismarck, the Indians of the region had been acting strangely. It was later learned that they had complete details of the battle several days before Marsh's arrival, though how it was transmitted to them remains a mystery. It may have been by smoke signals or some other primitive method; but the fact remains that they did, in a manner of speaking, scoop even the great *New York Herald.*

To its own correspondent, Mark Kellogg, the *Bismarck Tribune* paid only this somewhat corny and inaccurate tribute, couched in the stilted journalese of that far-off era:

"Of all the civilians, the body of Mark Kellogg alone remained unstripped of its clothing and was not mutilated. Perhaps as they had learned to respect the Great Chief, Custer, and for that reason did not mutilate his remains, they had in like manner learned to respect this humble shover of the lead pencil; and to that fact may be attributed this result. . . ."

With a shrewd eye cocked toward the *Herald's* circulation department, Publisher James Gordon Bennett immediately adopted Kellogg as his own correspondent; and the *Herald* capitalized to the fullest extent the drama of his tragic end. Actually, Bennett had never heard of Kellogg until Lounsberry's story came over the wire; but it made sensational reading; and *Herald* subscribers were duly thrilled to learn that the paper's

"own heroic correspondent" had been slain in the fighting.

In recent years the Associated Press, too, has assumed what can only be regarded as a rather tenuous claim to Kellogg as one of its own great heroes who died in line of duty. The AP as it exists today hadn't even been founded in 1876. True, there was indeed an "Associated Press of New York"; Mr. Bennett's *Herald* subscribed to such service as it offered; Colonel Lounsberry of the Bismarck *Tribune* was Bennett's correspondent; and Kellogg, in turn, was Lounsberry's man. So by stretching several points he may have been a distant cousin of AP but no more. Incidentally, the Associated Press of New York did not even get the story until several days after the *Herald*. Apparently Mr. Bennett, despite his tie-up with that early ancestor of today's great AP did not see fit to share his scoop.

In death, as in life, Kellogg remains the "mystery man of frontier journalism." While in Bismarck, he had been a close friend of Mr. and Mrs. John P. Dunn, who described the ill-fated reporter as "a young man in his middle thirties." He had come West to seek his fortune, after the death of his wife; and, according to the Dunns, had left two small daughters behind him in a town in Iowa.

After the battle, Kellogg's notes and personal effects were turned over to Mr. Dunn, who made an effort to discover the whereabouts of his children or any other relatives. But all inquiries went unanswered; and Kellogg's blood-stained notes, penciled in a fine neat script, are in the possession of the Dunn family to this day.

To Colonel Lounsberry and Mark Kellogg, equally, should go the credit for one of the greatest achievements in the history of American journalism; for, while Kellogg was killed on the field of battle, it was his complete set of dispatches that enabled Colonel Lounsberry to give the entire story to the world. And but for the whim of chance, it might well have been Lounsberry, instead of Kellogg, who penciled that last prophetic message found in the ill-starred reporter's dispatch case:

"We leave the Rosebud tomorrow and by the time this reaches you we will have met and fought the red devils, with what result remains to be seen.

"I go with Custer and will be at the death."

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LIVE BY THE SWORD

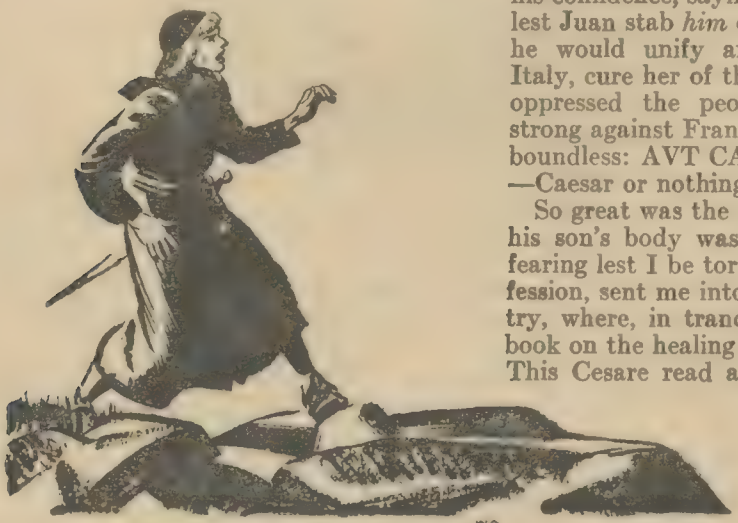
By F. R. BUCKLEY

Synopsis

JUNE, 1497—and I, GASPARE TORELLA, late of Spain, stalked the streets of Rome, possessed only of a sword, the clothes I stood up in, and my degree as a physician—valuable in that order. Suddenly, a cry in the night and I was out in a dark alley—to find a man's life ebbing away on the cobbled stones. Before I could aid him, I was seized by two bravos, and they, revealing they were in the Cardinal's service, and he being in need of a doctor, decided to take me to him.

Thus was I brought to a villa above Rome and found myself in the midst of the Borgia family: the Pope's three sons —the dissolute JUAN, DUKE OF GANDIA, who was drunk; GIUFFREDO, weak and effeminate; and CESARE, the CARDINAL, cold, heartless and brilliant; and their peasant mother, VANOZZA DE' CATANEI. But with honors of the Church, three kingdoms and an empire upon them, these Borgias were quarreling like fish-hawkers—only Cesare the Cardinal acting worthy of his rank. And having approved me with his cold blue eyes, he pronounced me in his service as personal physician.

Suddenly, the mortal hatred between him and his elder brother flared into violence. Juan, enraged when Cesare taunted him as a profligate and incompetent, plunged a table knife into his breast—and Cesare was saved only by the corselet he wore. Deadly and implacable, Cesare forced Juan to ride with him toward Rome, myself and his two bravos in attendance. In a moonlit square, he ordered Juan to defend himself with his sword, and he who fell in combat to be dropped into the Tiber to keep the truth from their father. Chilled with horror, I watched the brothers duel to the death—till Cesare ran his brother through the heart.



At the Vatican, this man whom I looked on as a murderer, took me into his confidence, saying he had killed Juan lest Juan stab *him* one day; in his place, he would unify an unhappy, divided Italy, cure her of the petty tyrants who oppressed the people, and make her strong against France. His ambition was boundless: AVT CAESAR AVT NIHIL —Caesar or nothing!

So great was the Pope's anguish when his son's body was found that Cesare, fearing lest I be tortured to force a confession, sent me into hiding in the country, where, in tranquillity, I wrote my book on the healing benefits of mercury. This Cesare read and dedicated to his

own glory when he came to surprise me some months later. In high spirits he was, for he had blackmailed Louis XII of France into making him Duke of Valentinois and to aid him against Milan. So off to France we sailed, amid pagan splendor. Now Cesare, having decided to marry CHARLOTTE OF NAVARRE, a child of seventeen, dandled the promise of a papal dispensation to remarry before Louis, only to learn that the BISHOP OF CEUTA had already told Louis it had been granted. But Cesare did marry Charlotte and lived with her long enough to arm an expedi-

He was running, bent almost double, up the ever-increasing slope toward me. And then his foot slipped. . . .

ILLUSTRATED BY JOHN CLYMER

tion against Milan and get her with child. Then, as we were about to set out, Cesare told me mockingly how the Bishop of Ceuta had died of a curious malady—and I realized in horror that I had, unwittingly, by teaching him about mercury, become his official poisoner!

I well knew that to desert Cesare was to die, but I was going to war as a soldier and perhaps I would fall in battle. . . . Thus it was I rode with the lancers and had my first taste of bloody combat—till I fell wounded. I regained consciousness in a sunlit farmhouse and found myself tenderly nursed by lovely AGATA NORI, orphaned daughter of a proud Milanese. I fell in love with her, but her father thinking me in the French King's service, and hating Cesare as an apostate and upstart, I told the truth only to Agata.

Even as Agata pleaded with me to leave Cesare's service and practice medicine in the country, a messenger arrived from Cesare, commanding me to care for the sick in the pestilence-ridden city of Imola, still held by the COUNTESS CATERINA SFORZA, already deposed by papal decree. And so, with Agata's approval, I set out for Imola, where I learned Cesare's true purpose in having me labor for the sick: to make the populace welcome him as a friend. But the Countess, a bold, imperious woman, was determined to fight him to the death and there were rumors that she plotted to poison the Pope. It fell to my lot to uncover her plan: a dispatch to the Pope planted upon a dying man to which the infection might cling. To frustrate the evil plot, I managed to escape from the stricken city and rode furiously to the Vatican, where, almost dead from exhaustion, I gasped out my tale to Cesare. He was still gloating over the power he now held over the Countess when her messenger bearing the dispatch was announced.

PART III

I SUPPOSE I turned pale—and why not?

Had I not seen my lord Duke slay his own brother: did I not know how he had murdered the Bishop of Ceuta? Now, with Michele the bravo standing by, his great paw ready on the hilt of his dagger and my lord whistling between his teeth like a basilisk in its den—what fate was I to expect for this approaching wretch who had tried to murder the Pope?

In imagination, I saw him shrink back from those terrible eyes of Cesare, shrink back into the arms of Michele, who would be standing behind him as he had stood behind me—I saw Cesare nod—heard the thud and the muffled scream as Michele did his work—

"Gaspare, Gaspare!" says his lordship in a chiding tone, and I found he was looking at me in amusement, and shaking his head slowly from side to side. "How art thou behind the times! Get behind the curtain."

"The *curtain*, Your Grace?"

"Yes, the curtain—there by the door. And thou, Michele, go to the guard-room and ask the lieutenant and a couple of his men to step this way immediately. The small guard-room, at the end of the corridor. They're to enter when I ring the bell. . . . Now I think we are ready for our visitor."

From my hiding-place—heart in my Adam's apple—I could peer through a jointure of the tapestry, and I saw his lordship, still whistling, seat himself at his table, settle his fur-trimmed robe over his shoulders, rub his hands and take up a sheaf from the piles of documents that lay before him. There had been no papers on that desk when I'd been in that room twenty months before. Thenadays, Cesare Borgia had had a sword and a map of Italy. Now I beheld him seemingly absorbed in high matters of State, and looking very grave and noble.

There came a knock at the door. Pietro announced the messenger of the Countess Caterina, and into the room, passing me at arm's length all unsuspecting, walked the squint-eyed man I'd last seen in that fever-stricken room at Imola.

He was better dressed now than he then had been—wore a plumed bonnet for one thing.

He now took it off in a sweeping bow to his lordship.

"Ah!" says Cesare, laying down his parchments and smiling. "The courier from our good cousin of Imola and Forli."

"With a dispatch for His Holiness, an't please Your Grace."

"Just so. I trust the Countess remains in good health?"

"By God's grace, she does so, Your Lordship."

"I'd heard," says Cesare, "that one of her cities had been smitten by the plague—a pernicious fever. Imola, was it, or Forli?"

"Imola, Your Grace."

"I am somewhat doubtful," says Cesare in a worried tone, "as to this missive thou hast in charge. Suppose it should convey some infection to the Holy Father?"

"Under favor," says the wretch, "that would be impossible. The parchment is in this casket, as Your Honor sees, and is besides wrapped in lead and sealed. I myself have been fumigated."

"Ah, 'tis that I could smell!" laughs the Duke. "I thought it must be incense drifting in from St. Peter's—it doth, sometimes; very pleasant. . . I presume her ladyship drew up this dispatch in the citadel?"

"Yes, Your Grace."

"And it hath had no chance of contact with infection?"

"No, Sire."

"Then I suppose it will be safe to have thee escorted to His Holiness," says Cesare, ringing his bell.

The door opened at once, and I heard the lieutenant salute.

"Your Lordship sent for me?"

I saw the squint-eyed messenger, his deadly casket in one hand, his gorgeous bonnet in the other, half turn and glance at the soldiers.

"Ah, yes, lieutenant. I would have thee escort this gentleman—"

He seemed to ponder.

"Only I doubt me—I doubt me lest this document should bear infection."

"It is impossible, Your Grace!"

I thought the man's voice was a little hoarse. What wonder!

"Still," says Cesare slowly, "I should like mine own physician to pass upon the matter. Indeed I will *have* my own physician pass upon the matter. Master Torella, step forth!"

"I Talked with God"

(Yes, I Did — Actually and Literally)

And as a result of that little talk with God a strange Power came into my life. After 42 years of horrible, dismal, sickening failure, everything took on a brighter hue. It's fascinating to talk with God, and it can be done very easily once you learn the secret. And when you do—well—there will come into your life the same dynamic Power which came into mine. The shackles of defeat which bound me for years went a-shimmering—and—now—? —well, I own control of the largest daily newspaper in our County, I own the largest office building in our City, I drive a beautiful Cadillac limousine. I own my home which has a lovely pipe-organ in it, and my family are abundantly provided for after I'm gone. And all this has been made possible because one day, ten years ago, I actually and literally talked with God.

You, too, may experience that strange mystical Power which comes from talking with God, and when you do, if there is poverty, unrest, unhappiness, or ill-health in your life, well—this same God-Power is able to do for you what it did for me. No matter how useless or helpless your life seems to be—all this can be changed. For this is not a human Power I'm talking about—it's a God-Power. And there can be no limitations to the God-Power, can there? Of course not. You probably would like to know how you, too, may talk with God, so that this same Power which brought me these good things might come into your life, too. Well—just write a letter or a post-card to Dr. Frank B. Robinson, Dept. 33, Moscow, Idaho, and full particulars of this strange Teaching will be sent to you free of charge. But write now—while you are in the mood. It only costs one cent to find out, and this might easily be the most profitable one cent you have ever spent. It may sound unbelievable—but it's true, or I wouldn't tell you it was.—Advt. Copyright, 1940, Frank B. Robinson.

I FLUNG the curtain aside and came into the room.

The messenger turned and saw me—first with a glance, then with a harder look at my travel-stained and most undoctorly garb, and then—as his eyes reached my face—with recognition.

The pupils of his eyes expanded, his mouth opened and his face went as white as linen.

The next moment, dropping his casket and his bonnet heedlessly to the floor, the squint-eyed man was on his knees, hands joined and raised in supplication to Cesare Borgia, babbling somewhat incoherently for mercy.

The Duke stood up.

"So," says he amiably, "what the doctor told me was true, ha? After all the good Countess' pains to keep this dispatch from infection, *thou* must go and put it in the bosom of a fevered man! To murder His Holiness—a common man like thee!"

"It was not I—not I—it was the Countess' order!" gasps the wretched man; and Cesare looked at him in stern amazement that might have deceived the very elect.

"Dost know what thou'rt saying?" says he. "Bethink thee, fellow! There are witnesses here!"

"I'll swear it on the four Evangelists," sobs the courier. "I am a poor man, Your Grace; I have a family and she—she—"

"Thou say'st the Countess Caterina Sforza devised this hellish scheme? With intent to slay the Holy Father?"

He said it thus clearly, looking past the confessor to the three soldiers. The lieutenant, crossing himself, nodded his comprehension.

"It is unbelievable," says Cesare Borgia, as if in a daze.

The next moment he was on his knees babbling to Cesare Borgia for mercy.

"'Tis true—I swear it!"

"Thou *shalt* swear it," says the Duke, "but not to me. Arrest him, lieutenant."

The soldier stepped forward, laid hand on the courier's shoulder and hauled him to his feet.

"Your Grace — Your Highness —" shrieks the man.

"Let him be safe kept," says Cesare. "If his story be true—but take him away, lieutenant. Dismissed!"

Michele had come in with the soldiers and remained when they departed. To him Cesare now said: "Thou know'st what to do?"

Michele nodded.

"Gaspare here," says His Grace, "thinks thou'rt to go and cut that fellow's throat."

Michele smiled. So did Cesare.

"He's to be tried tomorrow," says the Duke, serious again. "I cannot be there, nor Gaspare. So make sure the rogue's confession is well written and attested—especially about the Countess' complicity—and see that the ambassadors know of it. Especially the agents from Venice and Florence—ha?"

"Yes, my lord."

Pietro came to the door.

"The Captain Caracciolo is here, Your Grace."

"Send him in—and, Pietro! Take Messer Torella to his old chamber, see that he's well fed and bathed and put him to bed."

Seating himself again at his table, Cesare looked warmly at me.

"Rest well tomorrow, Gaspare. Thou'st done well in this business, and shalt not leave me again. And tomorrow night—Ah, Captain Caracciolo, welcome!—Thou canst go, Gaspare—I was just saying, Captain, that tomorrow or day after, I wish to lead some few of thy troops against Imola."

CHAPTER XI

TREASON FROM WITHIN

"TOMORROW night" and "some few of thy troops"—those were just parts of Cesare's new lordly way of speech, just as the "trial" to which he had committed yon murderous courier from Imola was symbol of his new ways of gaining his ends and crushing any who might oppose him. By secret means and private assassination, he had forced his way upward to a place where the courts must do his killings for him, and the world approve his vengeance.

Before we took horse for the north (which we did two days thence, with two squadrons of the best Papal cavalry jingling behind us), I had heard that the Countess Caterina's envoy had been tried in the presence of ambassadors from all the Romagna, found guilty and condemned to death.

And before we were out of Rome, I had seen the manner of death that had overtaken him. He had been bound to a wheel in the midst of the Piazza San Giovanni, and thereon revolved while an executioner broke all his bones with an iron bar. The wheel was still turning, and I think the squint-eyed man was still alive, when we rode past.

"My lord—my lord!" says I in horror, being then unacquainted with this torment brought in from France.

Cesare shrugged.

"Lamentable," says he, "but—when justice is done by courts, it must be done publicly, Gaspare, and according to the law. Our merry boyish days of steel and —er—unwholesome food, are over. We are a great lord, now, and must act the part. Heigho!"

The devilish twinkle in his eyes!

I saw it again at Imola when, a bare week later, we encamped outside that city with all our forces and the French guns ready to fire into the town.

Never, surely, can campaign have been so lightning-like as that. From Rome we had ridden post-haste to Argenta; at Argenta we had found Cesare's army—French, Papal forces, Burgundians and even Swiss infantry with their terrible axes—all ready to march at an instant's notice. And at an instant's notice they had marched—and at what a speed!

I forget, at this distance, how many leagues we covered in a day—horse, foot and guns, mark you, which last are the slowest of all. I think—but I will not give a figure, lest I be accused of boast-

ing, albeit I had nothing to do with the feat. It was Cesare who drove the men —foreigners and all—as their own officers had never dared to do, Cesare who rode up and down the column in the bitter rain as though he'd been lieutenant instead of Captain General; it was Cesare who bartered the King of France's fine white gun-horses for peasant nags worth nothing in comparison —but used to the country, and fresh.

Not a man had time for complaining; I, for instance, yearned to go to Nori, or at least send Agata some word, but in the rush of that column, 'twas impossible.

And I remember stopping, after the first day of march, beside a Burgundian cross-bowman who was tying rags about his bloody feet. I said it had been a hard day, and expected a storm of curses. But instead the man looked up and grinned and said he'd often wondered what it would be like to march with the devil, and now he knew.

"For if he's not Satan himself, driving us like this, he must be anyhow the Duke of Hell."

And that was the nickname that spread through the army. Cesare gloried in it!

FAST though he advanced, however, the Duke must fling out a javelin ahead of him. While we were yet half a day from Imola, he sent forward a flying squadron of French horse and, by that evening, had it back with news that the city would welcome us.

"The *city*," says Achille Tiberti, who had commanded the detachment, "but not the citadel, my lord."

It was now that I marked that devilish sparkle in Cesare's eyes.

"Not the citadel, ha?" says he. "Then let's pitch camp, Captain, and consider what to do. How long, in thine opinion, will it take us to reduce the citadel?"

Tiberti spread his hands.

"I am a cavalryman, Your Highness. But it is strong. Very strong."

"A week?"

Tiberti started. "Your Grace is pleased to joke."

"I never joke about warfare, Captain. And I never wager—or I'd wager thee a ducat that the citadel's ours within three days."

The Frenchman looked at him.

"If so," says he slowly, "I will admit Your Lordship—"

"—to be a better captain than thou'st thought me hitherto. Eh? That will be gratifying . . . Gaspare, come to my tent when it's pitched. I feel the need for low conversation."

So I was in his company when, after dark, the sentry at his tent-door challenged and, after parley with an escort, announced a visitor.

"From Imola, Sire," says the man in a hushed voice.

Cesare was not astonished. Nor, after that conclave I had seen in Rome, was I. The city had surrendered; this would be one of its notables, come to ingratiate himself early with the new lord. Not so early as those old men of Urbino, of Pesaro, of Faenza and of Rimini, who were in the Duke's pay while still his armies were far from their walls, but still—

"Admit him."

The man who entered was muffled in a long cloak; his hat was pulled down over his eyes, but it was evident he was not old like the others. Moreover, when he opened the cloak, it was visible that here stood no merchant, but a soldier. And when he took his hat off, I saw he was as pale as death.

"Ha, Signore Naldi," says Cesare easily. "Welcome! I've expected thee."

The man's eyes darted at me.

"My physician," says the Duke, "my other self. Gaspare, this is Captain Dionigio di Naldi, commanding the citadel of Imola."

It needed not his sidewise glance to remind me of the wager he'd been fain to make with Achille Tiberti. The captain of the citadel a traitor! My hair shifted on my scalp.

"Be seated, Captain," says Cesare, but the man stood staring at him, his hands writhing together.

"My lord—"

"Well?"

"The Countess Caterina hath left Imola, and gone to the citadel at Forli."

"So I'd heard. So we expected. What of that?"

"Sire—she hath taken my wife and children with her, as hostages."

"So?"

There was a moment of silence.

"Well?" says the Duke. "Have I not heard—hath not a rumor reached me—that of late thou'st turned somewhat from the Signora Naldi? And from the children?"

Naldi started as though a serpent had stung him.

"There occurs to me the name of a Madonna Dorottea Spinelli, a very beautiful lady, albeit a little extravagant—as I remember her. How doth *she* counsel you, Captain?"

Naldi glared at the Duke, his mouth working.

"I think—I think—" says he breathlessly, "God's wounds, thou sent her to me!"

Cesare said nothing. He had the tips of his fingers joined together and his thumbs against his chin; and over this construction he smiled.

"Would that be a matter for reproach?" he asked at last. "At least admit that if I did so, Captain, I sent thee good store of money to entertain her withal."

"But my wife and children!" pleaded Naldi, wild-eyed.

Cesare spread his hands in a gesture he had learned (I suppose) from the French. He learned everything, from everybody . . .

Suddenly Naldi buried his face in his hands.

"I am in hell!" he cried. "In hell!"

CESARE leaned across the camp-table.

"If so—thou'rt there with a pretty companion," says he. "Look you, Captain, 'tis too late for repentance, and—what the devil, thou'rt not alone! Dorottea aside—see this letter from the pedagogue Fabrizio; 'Come in and take us,' says he, 'and if aid be needed against the citadel, we'll help thee storm it.' Oons, have not the townspeople opened their gates?"

"They are—townspeople. I am a soldier. I have taken an oath."

"Thou'st taken money also."

"God help me."

"I would not rely on such aid, Captain. The five thousand ducats thou'st had—nay, 'twas more—were moneys of the Church. And justly employed, too, against a virago that would have poisoned the Pope."

"The Pope hath poisoned enough rich cardinals!"

"So?" says Cesare, swallowing. "So he may have found it necessary—to raise money to pay traitors. And if true, that should give thee more reason to be careful, Captain, in thy dealings with him—and with me. Better surrender the fortress according to plan, for if not, by God, I'll have it anyhow—and why should'st thou be hanged from a window?"

He joined his fingertips again.

"T h i n k how thy—widow—would grieve then!" he said. "And the children! Madonna Dorottea would doubtless console herself very soon, being—"

"No, no!" cried Naldi, flinging out his hands. He stood there panting, struggling with himself.

"Give me—give me a week."

"To make a show of resistance? Now look you, why should I sacrifice men—and, what's worse, get armor damaged and waste powder and ball, when—"

"Thou'lt waste more if I fight—and so long as I've a dagger at my belt, thou'lt never hang me, Cesare Borgia!"

His eyes were bloodshot and he was trembling violently. I sickened at the sight of his torment, but Cesare considered him calmly.

"What's to prevent me from hanging thee now?"

The captain started forward.

"Nay, nay," says Cesare, waving a hand at him. "Let us do things decently and in order. I'll play soldiers with thee for—two days; that must be enough. 'Twill give my cannoneers practice. So here: tomorrow I'll occupy the city—all but the quarter where the fever was—and thou canst show zeal by firing on that quarter with thy guns; save me the trouble of knocking down those hovels. Eh?"

For a long moment, Naldi stood poised—I thought he would fling him-

self on the Duke, and had gathered my muscles for a leap between them. Then —it must have been Cesare's gaze that prevailed—the man's shoulders drooped, he nodded and half-turned toward the tent door.

"Must go?" says Cesare lightly (but I heard the relief in his voice). "Not a cup of wine? Nothing, Captain?"

"I must go," muttered Naldi, as though dazed.

"So. Sentry!" Cesare called. "Escort the gentleman. Godspeed, Captain—until we meet again. And my respects to the lady Dorottea!"

When the unfortunate was gone, stumbling into his future of shame, Cesare turned to me. He was grinning in triumph; but became grave.

"Ah!" says he. "Not to thy liking, Gaspare?"

I said nothing.

"Well, speak!"

"Under favor, Your Highness—"

"Under favor! All thou say'st is under favor. I use thee as touchstone for a hundred thousand innocents like thee. What is so terrible about this traitor Naldi?"

"'Tis not about him, Sire—"

"But about me? I led him to damnation, ha? Think, Gaspare, could I have done so, had he been an honest man?"

Before I could answer, he burst forth:

"To save his rotten soul, am I to sacrifice the lives of decent soldiers? When he was panting for a wench and a bribe to spend on her, should I have respected his virginity and got scores of good men-at-arms blown into bloody ribbons? Or should I maybe retire and let the like of Caterina Sforza continue to defy the Pope and rob the Church and maltreat its children? What weapon have these tyrants scrupled to use—this same Caterina, poison most foul, under thy very eyes. And shall I fight such folk with scabbarded sword? God witness me, it's maddening! Dreamers like thee moan ever for a better world—and when one's in the making, ye moan at the means. But I've taken my path," says the Duke, smiting the table violently with his fist, "and on it I will travel—moan, groan, die or be damned who must! There!"

"Your Grace—" says I.

"I'm tired," he said, burying his face in his hands. "Thou'rt a fool, Gaspare. Like most of mankind. Go to bed."

SEEMINGLY the folk of Imola were less foolish than the mass of humanity, for when Cesare rode into their stricken town next morning, gallant and gay at the head of two hundred cavalry, they summoned up such strength as fever and starvation had left them and gave him a welcome worthy of a god.

The scholar Fabrizio was on hand with a Latin greeting; the Council of Thirty turned out in full force, with petitions His Grace promised to read as soon as ever he should have time. And the citizens, down to the newest-born baby of 'em, lined the streets and cheered their liberator wherever he appeared.

Aye—they cheered him even though at his side rode Vitellozzo Vitelli, most cruel and treacherous of *condottieri*. I think (such was their faith in Cesare) that they would have cheered him still had he ridden visibly with the Prince of Darkness.

I do not know what they thought when they learned that this Vitellozzo was to be left in charge of their city; when the foot-soldiers marched in and began billetting themselves about the town; when our artillery took up its stand outside the Church of the Annunciation, and when Naldi's cannon from the fortress began to answer by bombarding the market-quarter.

For by that time we—the Duke and I and the handsome horse-troops—were already on our way to Forli, by way of Faenza.

I looked back through the dusk at Imola that had been so eager for peace, and saw the air above it red with gun-flashes, and as I watched, the new tower of the market-hall—of which citizens had babbled to me with pride even on their death-beds—folded in the midst like the mouth of an old woman and fell soundlessly into the square. That is —I could not hear it, at that distance, because Cesare was doing me the honor to converse.

"Never look backward, Gaspare," says he, happily. "Look forward as I do—to Faenza. Now, *there's* a happy town. The Manfredi have done ill in the past, to be sure, but this young new lord Astorre makes up for all. He sells not his folk for soldiers—their taxes are light—he hath paid up the arrears of tribute to Holy Church. Indeed, he heads almost the perfect state. At eighteen, he cannot spread such perfection throughout Italy—but thou'lt see how he loves me, who *can*. And will!"

Boom, boom went the guns behind us. . . But at Faenza everything was music. And banners. And dancing. And wine. And pleasant young ladies who played lutes in the great hall of the palace and seemed to have no bedrooms of their own.

"Eh?" Cesare inquired of me concerning these damsels, one morning as I attended him at breakfast.

The admiration of young Astorre, from whom he had scarce been separated since our arrival, had pleased him greatly; he was in high good humor. I was emboldened.

"Sire," I said. "The fact is—the fact is—that I am affianced. Or at least hope to be. Wherefore—"

He paused at sopping bread in his wine-cup.

"Well, rot me! Affianced? But no matter; I'm wed—and a father too, come to think on't. Who's the girl?"

I told him, and he stuck out his under-lip.

"M'm. I know those Nori—by repute. Proud as Lucifer and poor as Job. Come, Gaspare—canst do better than that. I've taken a fancy to thee, as thou must know—maybe our stars are commingled—and it's in my mind to make thy fortune. As a soldier, most like; thou'rt a trifle too squeamish to go far in medicine. Whereas at *open* killing I hear good reports of thee. Ha ha!"

"Under favor," says I, flushing, "'tis medicine I would live by, Your Highness. In the country."

"Where you can feed your scruples on acorns, hah?"

"My lady let me go," says I, stammering—for the good humor had vanished from his face and his eyes were now ominously chill, "my lady let me go—to tend the sick at Imola—"

"Madonna Nori graciously permitted a servant of mine—do I follow you? Yes? And what am I to do in return for this great boon?"

To ask him for leave to depart would be madness. That was very clear.

"Sire, it is fifteen days—she will be wondering—I thought if a courier—"

MY heart lightened as, all of a sudden, Cesare smiled again most amiably—but 'twas not at me. Astorre Manfredi had come in at the door behind me. A beautiful youth was he—tall, golden-haired, graceful and strong—and rich besides, and master of himself. God, how I envied him!

"Welcome, my lord!" says Cesare. "And doubly welcome for thine advice. Here am I—half sick and with the siege of Forli ahead of me, and here's my physician (though I intend to make a soldier of him, and perhaps the governor of a city later on) wanting to leave me and marry a pauper and physic pigs in the *campagna*. And demanding that I give him a courier to aid his nefarious designs. *I* think—but perhaps politics have made me bilious. How sayest thou, Astorre? Thou'rt dewy-eyed thyself."

Laughing, the young noble looked at me. Patted me on the shoulder.

"Give him his courier, Cesare."

"And rob myself? Well—I can refuse thee nothing, Astorre. And as the devil will have it, I've a man riding in that very direction this afternoon. Begone and get thy love-letter written, Gaspare. But mark you—no realease until I've taken Forli. If thou'lt not march with me the whole route, by God thou shalt stay the first stage. I'll have no desertions. . . . Sit down, Astorre."

When I came back, the boy was gone, and 'twas Vitellozzo Vitelli that occupied the chair opposite Cesare. And the Duke's expression was changed to match. He was pinching his lower lip in his fingers and scowling.

"And what befell Naldi—when he'd delayed thee this extra day?"

"Well, as I tell you—we'd blown this breach in the walls—"

"Proving that my cannon *are* of some use?"

"Of course. I always knew it."

Cesare laughed and shook his head.

"Always—after the event. Well?"

"Well," says Vitelli, glaring at him, "these French gunners fire at regular intervals, and just when a fire was due, what does this Naldi do but appear on the rubble of the breach—right in front of the guns—and what's more, with a woman in his arms! A woman all in velvet, and kicking and screaming. I was there at the battery, as it chanced, and of course I shouted to them to hold their fire. But the foreign louts didn't understand me, so bang went their stink-pots and down comes a dozen ells of battlement on Naldi and the woman too. So—"

"Killed?" asked Cesare gently.

"Killed? Of course killed. What a damned foolish question, Borgia!"

I would not for a thousand ducats have had that gaze of Cesare's turned on me.

"Foolish—compared," says he more gently still, "with thine own question as to when I attack Florence, to avenge thy brother that was beheaded for treachery. Is that it?"

Vitelli half rose. Cesare got fully to his feet.

"I may do that when I'm quite satisfied," says he, "that treachery does not run in thy family, Vitellozzo. . . . Have the troops gone to Forli?"

"Aye."

"And the guns?"

"Yes. I—"

"We'll march from here tomorrow—and now, *signore,* I will excuse thee."

This to the greatest commander of free horse north of the Po River! But his cavalry were not behind him at that moment—and in front of him were those eyes of Cesare Borgia. Vitelli muttered something under his breath and slunk out of the room.

The Duke smiled and held out his hand for my letter.

"Jacopo will carry this," he said, "and 'twas he that summoned thee back to my service, was't not? First brought thee into it, for that matter. Well, the Lord giveth, the Lord taketh away. . . That would be Dorottea Spinelli in Naldi's arms—that was screaming before the guns fired, Gaspare."

"Yes, Sire."

"God rest her soul. She was a good wench—very useful. . . Seemingly Naldi blamed her for his dishonor. Her and himself."

"Yes, Sire."

"Not me," says Cesare, as 'twere wistfully.

I knew not what to say to this, so stood silent.

His lordship flung my letter to the table and seated himself.

"Still a fool, I see, Gaspare," he said in a tired voice. "Dismissed!"

CHAPTER XII

CAPTURE BY RANSOM

FOR the first three weeks, the siege of Forli—or at least of the citadel, for the town had welcomed us as warmly as had Imola—was a very dull affair.

Once again (in the hope of sparing his precious cannoneers from harm) Cesare had mounted his guns near a church; as he said, he approved highly of scruples if any profit could be made on them. The Countess Caterina, however, was quite as lacking in that commodity as he was himself; her wall-guns fired at our bombards and falconets with complete disregard for San Giorgio, his fane or dignity.

And just before Christmas, she caused to be hoisted over her battlements the standard of Venice.

Cesare roared with laughter.

"Trying to deceive a poor trusting lad!" says he, looking at the flag from the window of the palace where we lodged. "Ah, woman, woman! Pretending to have made alliance with Venice, is she—with her city blockaded tight as a drum, and her besieger himself a Venetian noble! Didst know that, Gaspare? Yes, I'm to be inscribed on the Golden Book soon; just as thou'rt to be married—soon. Oh, zounds, is that why thou'st been looking so glum lately? Because Jacopo's not returned with news?"

"It hath been a long time."

"He had other business in the north.

Thine may seem more important to thee, Gaspare, but *I* need more French troops and they're taking their time about deciding to let me have them, curse it. Besides, I should think what thou'st seen of women—this Caterina—though I like her spirit. And she's a fine figure of a woman. I think—yes, *per Bacco,* I'll send her an invitation to parley."

Which he did, and had an answer on Christmas Eve, a day I would fain erase from my memory.

To school me in soldiering (since there was little military action toward, except for the artillery and arquebusiers) Cesare had appointed me *bargello* of the town; that is, I commanded fifty *sbirri* who were soldiers of the Duke's own guard, for the keeping of order in the town. Theretofore, I had patrolled quite bloodlessly, thinking no little of myself.

On the eve of Christmas, however, some companies of Swiss (no doubt sick for their homeland and tired of service under the Bailie of Dijon) had got bountifully drunk and therewith amorous. And, the first townswoman they encountered being wife to a butcher (who, in the general disarming, had been left the tools of his trade), of course there was soon a Switzer with his head split open—a butcher-shop fired by his comrades—a riot, and some fifty prisoners.

On whose capture I went to report to the Duke.

But he had no time for them; he had a letter in his hand and was beaming at the prospect of meeting the Countess Caterina.

"I'll see to those fellows later," says he. "Pietro! My scarlet suit and the inlaid half-armor. I'm going to meet a beauteous widow. Face to face, Gaspare. See! She's going to let down the drawbridge and meet me in the middle of it. Thoughtful, too—all the wall-guns o' that side are to be abandoned—"

"She tried to poison Your Grace's father," I reminded him.

"Ho! But my father is old and fat. I do not think she will betray *me*—Come, Pietro; and be careful of my points. We'll see if we can't shorten this siege by other means than cannon-balls. . . I'll take thee with me, Gaspare. That yearning look should soften a woman's heart."

So I was with him, on the bank of the citadel moat, when the drawbridge began to creak downward. I was apprehensive, watching the loopholes for the barrels of arquebuses or the snouts of arbalests, but Cesare was entirely the gallant.

"I am eager to meet her, indeed," says he to me in a low voice. "From the walls, she appears to be—ah!"

THE drawbridge was down to that point where we could look beyond it into the gate of the castle and see the Countess standing alone, in half-armor, on the sill. She had laid off her helmet, but still wore her sword, and, posed with her hand on the hilt of it, made a fine figure. I could well believe that when rebels had threatened to kill children of hers, she had laughed and told them she could make more. Well believe, too, that she had stood by while soldiers slew men, women and children—every inhabitant of one quarter—to avenge the slaying of her husband. Then also I remembered her amidst the plague—cold, stern, unconcerned for her people but relentlessly careful of herself.

But she was good to look upon, no denying that, if one cared for that style of beauty—as did Cesare.

So much so, that while the bridge was still a hand's breadth from the ground, he leaped on it and was hurrying toward the waiting lady when—

I saw sudden movement behind the black window surmounting the portcullis—where the machinery is for the raising of the drawbridge. Whether I shouted a warning or not I do not know—the bridge was down by this time, and its chains slack; but in that fearful moment, just as my master reached the centre of the planking, I saw the chains tighten again with a jerk. I must have yelled—unless my voice was soundless in my throat. I know that by blind impulse I hurled myself at the steel-shod edge of the bridge and tried to hold it down against the pull of the winches, by main force.

Cesare had felt the planks rising under his feet; had hesitated, incredulous of the treachery, and now was running, bent almost double, up the ever-increasing slope toward me. His feet slipped and he fell on his face—clutching, by sheer good fortune, his fingers into a crack between the boards.

The edge of the bridge was out of my grasp by now. From beyond the screen of the planking I could hear the Countess shouting to the winch-men to turn faster—faster—and in shadow against the spaces between the boards, I could see the figure of Cesare. Speechless, I saw it move upward—he had his fingers and toes in those cracks and was climbing the rising floor like a ladder. Someone shot at him, spreadeagled as he was, with an arbalest, and I heard the bolt strike into the wood with a twang. But still he climbed, and now he was at the edge I had so lately relinquished. His head came in sight, the eyes staring, the face contorted with effort—he gave a mighty heave and was crouching on the edge. And then, just as a salvo of arquebus fire roared out from above him—he leaped.

He had perhaps five ells to drop, and the same to cover lengthwise, if he was not to fall in the moat. He landed in the mud and marish-weed of the bank-edge and, with my hand to help him, struggled forth all muddy, without his hat.

"God's blood!" he shouted, turning and shaking his fist at the bridge which had now risen until it hid the Countess. "You treacherous strumpet—"

"Sire, Sire," says I, "the arquebuses!"

"They're not reloaded yet," says he, cool even in his abundant rage. "Hear me, you dog's wife! Thou'lt sweat for this!"

He called her divers other names—all (I now reflect with curiosity) referring to what he had hoped to make of her, rather than what she had proved herself to be. He picked up a stone and flung it at the battlements; and, as we went away with another volley from the arquebuses droning about our ears, complained furiously to me that his scarlet suit was ruined!

I could hardly forbear to laugh; but the next half-hour effectively cured me of that inclination.

"I'll have her, by God—dead or alive!" the Duke was storming. "I'll offer blood-money. Twenty thousand ducats—dead or alive. Laugh at me, shall she? We'll see who laughs last!"

The provost-marshal entered, his knock at the door unheard in this tempest, and saluted with a clash.

"Well?"

"Under favor," says the man, "the fifty prisoners, Your Grace."

"Fifty prisoners?"

"Fifty-four to be precise, Sire. The Swiss. Rioters."

"Ah, yes. Hang them."

The marshal saluted again. As for me, I did not believe this.

"*Hang* them, Your Grace? But these are only—"

"Hang them!"

I still did not believe it—until I came upon some dozen of the poor wretches dangling side by side out of windows in one street, with labels on their feet saying "pillager." For the present, I stood there as if petrified, while the provost-marshal closed the door gently behind him and departed.

As for Cesare, I doubt but his wounded vanity made him unconscious of the sentence, much more of the strangling, the choking, the kickings of the legs—the tears of the women far away in those Switzer mountains.

He was sitting at his table now, still muddy up to the knees and all unlaced, writing on a piece of parchment and muttering: "Twenty thousand—ducats—reward—"

IT hath been said that the reward was earned by a former lover of the Countess, who received one of the proclamations our Duke shot into the citadel attached to cross-bow bolts, and who sent out information by the same means.

As to this, I cannot say, because during the two or three weeks which followed our adventure with the drawbridge, I saw little of Cesare. For one thing, he was busy as a madman devising new methods against the citadel and seeing them put into effect. And

then again he seemed to have taken a distaste for my company. At the time, I was wounded by this coldness on the part of his lordship; and puzzled, though comforted, when he ordained that I should continue to command my fifty guardsmen—and even take place at the head of the assault when time should come for action by the infantry.

Nowadays, being better acquainted with the writhings of human vanity when it is wounded, I am of opinion that Cesare shunned me because I had witnessed his humiliation at the moat, and that his putting me so generously in the forefront of the battle was his way of silencing my witness forever, *videlicet*, by getting me killed.

However and howbeit—both as regards this and the betrayal of the citadel from within—I record that whereas theretofore Cesare had had his guns pounding at the fortress' enceinte from various angles without making much impression, on a certain day in January he moved all the guns opposite one spot in the walls—less likely looking than several he had attempted earlier—and began battering at this spot by day and night as well.

Moreover, so certain did he seem that the wall would now be breached quickly, that he ordered the citizens of Forli to empty the wheat sacks in the town granary, fill them with earth and stand ready to fling these in the moat to make a causeway for the assault-troops.

I expected bitter protest at this proclamation, and had my guardsmen standing to arms when it was read; but behold! the Forlivese were most eager to sacrifice their food, and among those who volunteered for the perils of the carrying-party were women, and old women at that.

"I've seen plenty hanged for resisting the soldiery," croaks one old crone to me. "I lost a son that way. But never'd I see a soldier hanged for oppressing the people, till now. Nor ever thought to see it—let alone fifty of 'em. *Viva il Duce!* God bless him!"

Aye—Cesare's burst of petty rage had won him the love of the Forlivese more effectively than any kindness could have done—any benevolent lightening of their taxes or loosening of their laws. So it is when a man's star is on the ascendant; his most foolish deeds will seem to profit him, he can do naught wrong. And indeed, as I could see despite the glare of gunfire and the halo of watch-beacons in the night sky, the Duke's ruling star, red Mars, was high in his own sign of the Scorpion.

It moves quickly through the heavens, though, does Mars.

And from its exaltation, whither can it move, in all the zodiac, except toward its detriment and fall?

Cesare was moving quickly also.

THE wall of the enceinte—though less pounded by all his guns than it had been by bombardments at other points—was beginning to crack. A length of battlement had given way and fallen into the moat, making narrower the space that must be filled by earth-bags and faggots, and exposing a scaffold on which masons had been working frantically to strengthen the wall.

Fatal error! Evidently, this had been a weak spot, but by taking out stones from the original to key their new work into, these bunglers had weakened the fabric still more. And when once it was cracked, the breach widened with exceeding speed. By the eleventh day of January, little remained of the wall over a length of two or three ells, save the footings, about breast-high.

And the night between that day and the twelfth, I received orders through old Pietro, to take position with my storming-party at the head of the troops. 'Twas he came to me, because my quarters were in the palace, but all the assembly was commanded by messengers without trumpet blown.

The cannon were firing less violently now, because what remained of the wall was six ells thick, and immovable. They belched only an occasional load of hard rubbish over the ruins, to keep the defenders away from the breach while the earth-bags and fascines were piled into the moat.

And behind the artillery (which would cease fire when the storming began) were drawn up all our foot-troops, wait-

ing in the darkness and the cold. Watch-fires were forbidden—and I hope it was the cold that made my teeth chatter as the sky began to lighten eastward.

It was quite suddenly that an arm of red light shot over the horizon—as if either the sun were stretching in his bed, or the devil were upraising a hand in benediction of this work.

And at the same time, there shot up and rang out the rocket and the trumpet commanding the assault.

I was not afraid—not in my mind, that is—but there seemed to be a languor in the long muscles of my legs, which, in those first moments, allowed my men to get ahead of me. Not that they ran, either, as I had imagined they would at the charge; rather they loped forward, laughing and joking among themselves, like laborers going to their employ. Which they were, in fact, with their overseer (the sergeant) looking round to see where was the master—myself.

I thought he was smiling in mockery of me, and therefore made a mighty effort to dash past him—to the moat-edge, on across the quaking earth-bags and up the crumbling glacis of the wall. Yes—I was first into the breach, not because of heroism, nor even because I thought I could earn the twenty thousand ducats to marry Agata and go practice medicine in the country withal, but only because I knew no better.

Perhaps that was why Cesare had chosen unsoldierly me to lead the storm-party. He was clever enough. . .

I found it was now time for me to be clever also—clever or cloven—for behold, as I jumped down from the wall, crowds of enemy rushing at me from both sides, bearing weapons of a variety dazzling to contemplate. I was indeed standing stupid, wondering whether a halberdier on my right or a two-handed swordsman on my left would be first within reach, when my detachment tumbled over the wall, split into two parties and went craftsmanlike to work on the defenders who were now attacking us.

"Out o' the way, sir, if you please!" says the old sergeant. "Don't want the following troops landing on your back. Hang about, and when it's two to one anywhere, give the odd man two inches o' blade. Not more!"

HE broke off, because at that moment some Switzers came into the enceinte and, without pausing to see might they be needed where they were, rushed yelling toward the drawbridge of the inner citadel. This bridge was down, because defenders who had taken shelter from the gunfire were now pouring out of this tower like bees from a shaken hive—and bringing damned ugly stings with them. They bore, to be exact, short spears which they could either drive like cavalrymen or hurl like archers, and they bore besides short swords like infantry. So that one was damned if one knew what to call them — and apt to be damned before he found out.

I was just thinking that such hermaphrodites would by nature spring from a man-woman's mind like that of the Countess, when one of them that had poked and hewn his way through the Swiss, confronted me—and by God's mercy went down on the instant with the back of his head blown away. It was one of the Sforza arquebuses from the walls that had got him, or certainly he would have split me to the chin. And thereafter I did less thinking and a great deal more looking about me.

What previous fighting I had done, had been ahorseback. Now, in the midst of this infantry fight, I realized why the cavalry hath always been considered the proper service for gentlemen. One may be killed on a horse, aye, and trampled into red pottage beneath the hoofs of a struggling squadron; but one does not stab a man and feel one's blade stuck in his ribs (the horse will pull it loose, so be one holds firmly to the hilt) and one does not find dying men snapping like dogs at one's ankles.

I have teeth-marks on my shin-bone to this day, from a lad the old sergeant stabbed, and who bit me in his death-agony. I was battling with a Sforza halberdier at the time, and was not aware of my wound until, having felled him, I made to advance and found myself dragging a jaw-locked corpse. Ah, God, the horror of that moment! I felt

as though I were in some cave, some cellar, some tunnel beneath the foundations of humanity, on a level with the beasts that fight snarling in forest swamps and mangle each other to death.

I was snarling myself, I dare say, then or thenabouts. A fellow who had lost his sword and gone mad from a head-cut that deluged him with blood, flung himself at me with his bare hands so quickly that I could not use my sword; seized me by the throat, hurled me to the ground and tried to strangle me. Yes, I dare say I snarled then—reaching up into his dripping face as the world began to blacken and swirl around me, and driving with my fingers at his eyes. He reared backward and I kicked upward with my knees; I rolled sidewise like a vicious horse, wriggled like an eel in a frying-pan—and know not to this day what bestial manoeuvre rid me of my burden.

I write as I remember, in bits and pieces. I know poets do otherwise, and have admired their flowing accounts, but I do not think they had ever been in the hand-to-hand. I know not even how long that battle lasted, or how many men I killed, if any, or how many came how near to killing me.

Very soon, the enceinte was so full of fighting men—the Maschio tower was empty now, but more of ours kept pouring through the breach every minute—that it was almost impossible to fall, and quite impossible to rise again if fall one did. Men dropped their swords for lack of room to use 'em, and then had scarcely space to use their daggers. My sergeant was carried past me in the press, cursing furiously because he'd trodden on a fallen blade. I saw one dead man squeezed entirely upward by the pressure of the crowd and rolling about among the heaving heads like a waterlogged wreck in a tideway—there are no such fights nowadays, no such fights nowadays, thank God! That's one thing the artillery hath done for us.

WHO began the retreat across the bridge?

Or the advance over it—according as the bellwether was Sforzan or for Borgia?

All I know is that one moment the drawbridge was clear, and that the next, it was a mass of men, stabbing and hacking in such numbers that the winchmen had no chance to pull it up. The Countess, visible now on the battlements above the gate, ordered the gunners on the walls to fire right downward, and their first blast blew perhaps half the strugglers from the bridge into the water. But before the cannoneers could load again, before the winchmen could bend to their bars, the bridge was as heavily burdened as ever—with the to-and-fro tending toward its inner end.

I was astonished to find myself on the said bridge, dismayed to find myself a target for arquebusiers—and grateful at last to find myself under the archway, safe from their fire. What damnable weapons, after all, are these firearms—pistolets, musket—oons, and all the abominable family of cannon! All that stands in their favor is the length of time it takes to prepare them for their shot. If ever a way be found (which seems unlikely) to load and fire them faster, the race of man must wipe itself from the face of the earth. Unless, meantime, mankind shall have learned to control its greeds and passions—which seems more unlikely still.

Howbeit, I was under the archway, and there, the courtyard being full, I stayed until someone shouted that a white flag was waving from the battlements, and the men on the bridge stabbed less violently, and buffeted each other while casting anxious looks aloft; and at last stood looking foolishly into one another's faces.

"The Countess is taken!" came voices from the head of the stairs—a spiral stair led upward from the archway, near me. "Way for the Countess! In the Duke's name!"

It was a Burgundian soldier who had seized her, in the innermost room of her apartments, and she had tried to stab him and he was roaring with laughter at this (being drunk) as he followed her across the drawbridge. He was showing all and sundry a cut on the back of his hand, and yelling: "Twenty thousand ducats for this cat-scratch! When I've been offering all m' arms and legs for a

ducat a week! Ha ha! Slowpokes, the rest of ye!"

Ransom!

On the instant, all within hearing went mad for it. The Countess might not be torn from the Burgundian, because all knew she was the Duke's private prey; but any of her train who appeared were captured instanter and robbed at knife's point of anything they might possess.

The Burgundian soldier who had seized her roared with laughter when she tried to stab him.

Fearing what was to follow, I forced my way in the track of the Burgundy man and his prize—and just in the shadow of a ruined wall came upon one of of our Papal infantry, quarreling with a Swiss about who'd captured a pallid youth they were pulling and hauling between them. I suppose he may have had a couple of florins, may rashly have offered to buy his life.

"He's mine!" shouted the infantryman.

"Mine first!" yells the Swiss, with a torrent of German oaths.

I passed hastily by them, but as I mounted the wrecked wall, I must needs turn my head to see what had befallen.

The pallid youth was on the ground with his throat cut; the heroes, Papal and Swiss, were on their knees beside him, fighting for his purse. . .

MUCH hath been written—and sung, too—about the siege of Forli and the intrepid Countess and the gallant Duke. It hath been said that the Duke was gallant toward the Countess in another sense, but this I do not believe; they were so alike in so many ways, those twain, that they loathed and detested each other. Besides (as I heard the Duke tell the Countess) Caterina was almost old enough to be Cesare's mother; and she replied that if she had been, she would have begged him to strangle her. . .

I have written so much as I have, about humbler people for the most part, to save myself the describing of many other sieges I was to see, and which I would fain forget. Fossate—Piombino—Arezzo—Citta di Castello—they were all much the same, even down to the murdering of boys for their pocket-money. The sweet singers, I find, devote no lines to such matters, being more occupied with the noble deeds of the commanders—who are rarely to be found in the melee.

Cesare had not been with us in the assault, I learned when at last I got back to my quarters in the palace. An urgent dispatch had called him back to the city; and ever since, he'd been closeted with the Bailie of Dijon and Yves d'Allegre, the French commander.

"But thou'rt to go in," says old Pietro. " 'Twas Jacopo brought the dispatch, and I think he had a letter for thee also. The Duke's had bad news. Be careful of him."

I cared little for *his* bad news. A letter from Agata—at last! How welcome that would be after this day of blood and tears! My heart was so high that I walked into the Duke's cabinet without knocking on the door—and found him too furious with the Frenchmen, to notice the omission.

Monseigneur d'Allegre was speaking.

"After all, Your Grace, the troops were but lent; and if the Milanese have rebelled, is that any fault of His Most Christian Majesty? Milan is a greater city than Pesaro—and the Duke Lodovico a more powerful enemy than Your Highness' brother-in-law. At all events, the case stands that we must leave Your Grace. And at once."

"These Sforze!" cries Cesare. "I'd root out the lot of them! Look you, d'Allegre: Forli's the key to a whole nest of tyrannies—you know that. I've put the fear of God and Cesare Borgia into all of 'em, striking so hard and so swiftly as I have done. Another blow—at Pesaro—and the whole countryside will be in my hands. With your horse and cannon, I can take Pesaro in a week. In a week! But if you go north now—what the devil can I do against a walled city without guns? They'll have time to get their wits back, and I must start all over again!"

The Frenchman spread his hands.

"I regret," says he, "but we have our orders. And Your Grace hath his own dispatches. The plight of us French at Milan is desperate. We must march tomorrow. Giangiacomo Trivulzio would not write as he doth, if those rebels were not at his throat."

"And I'm to be left with light horse and pretty-pretty infantry," growls Cesare. "Why the devil would not my father buy cannon when I told him to? The old fool!"

It must have been my witless crossing of myself that caught his smouldering eye. I thought he would blaze out at me—but instead he seemed brought to a standstill in his anger.

"Ah, Gaspare," says he, absently.

THERE was a moment of silence. I looked eagerly at the papers on his table, but could see among them no letter that might be mine.

"Then," says Monseigneur d'Allegre, somewhat timidly for so great a captain, "we have Your Grace's permission?"

"Permission?" shouts Cesare, suddenly all ablaze again. "You have my permission to go to the devil! Go battle for your lousy Milan! If ye think lack of you can stop me—if ye think I'll not

be back in the Romagna with better troops than yours—watch, my lords, and see your mistake!"

What a polite people are the French! And how practical withal! By this time, Monseigneur d'Allegre and the Bailie were at the door, bowing and walking backward, but waiting for no more of the Duke's harangue.

He stood looking after them for a moment, then sat heavily down in his chair and looked at me.

"Bad news," he muttered. "Bad news. For both of us."

I felt my heart chill.

"Pietro said Your Lordship had a letter for me."

Cesare regarded me steadily.

"Not a letter," said he; and seemed to reflect. And to come to a decision. "The lady—could not—write."

I stared at him.

"Could not? Why, was she—was she—" I stammered.

The Duke still regarded me.

"Was she—ill?"

He rose and took a step toward me.

"Look you, Gaspare—"

"Not—not—"

His Highness put his arm about my shoulders.

"Not—dead?"

"Death comes to all."

"But no!" I shouted into his face. "'Tis false! She's not dead! Not Agata! Where's Jacopo?"

"Jacopo's had to ride again, with an urgent message—to Rome. But look you, Gaspare—"

It hath been well said, that there are two men in each of our skins. Certes there were two of me thenceforth for some minutes. Of the twain, the young lover was shouting and raving that this could not be so—against all the Duke's sad words and head-shakings; the other, the physician, was aloof, reflecting that there had been fever near to Nori, as well as at Imola; that Fra Tommaso had been away, treating the stricken poor; that—believing the disease was borne by insects—he would not have fumigated himself before going to Agata's home . . .

"*He* killed her!" I shouted furiously—having, the moment before, cried out that I knew she was alive and well. "*He* killed her, the monkish quack! He and his mosquitos!"

Cesare Borgia took me by the shoulders. He was one of the strongest men in Italy—later I was to see him behead a bull with one sweep of a two-handed sword. And now he shook me.

"Look, fellow!" says he, as stern as he had been kind. "Thou'st lost a girl, it seems. I may have lost a kingdom—an empire! Shall we lie down on the floor and bawl in concert—or shall we go on and show Fate we're its masters? Answer me—or shall I shake thee again?"

My voice stuck in my throat; I could not answer, but he did not shake me. Instead he smiled, suddenly and brotherly, and when he spoke again, his voice was gentle.

"Come, Gaspare! Come doctor! Thou shouldst know better than I—for death there is no cure. But for sorrow the cure is—action. Now, wilt thou ride north and mourn over the empty nest, or take horse and heart and ride with me to Rome?"

The empty nest! The old white house, the autumn leaves that had glowed in its pathways all blackened now, and sodden and dead . . .

There was a great lump in my throat, but I was a physician, was I not? Should I, indeed, like so many I had pitied, shrink from the wing-tips of the Angel I knew so well?

I was a soldier, also.

"Yes," I said, as well as might be. "Yes, sir— Your Highness—I'll ride—to Rome."

CHAPTER XIII

THE CONQUEROR

IT was jubilee in the Holy City, that year of our Savior one thousand five hundred, and of Pope Alexander's reign the eighth; and I do not suppose that ever before or since hath Rome been so magnificently decked or filled with such festivities.

Our homecoming, with Cesare as conqueror and with pageantry increased to cover the late frustration of his plans, must have put to shame the triumphs of the old Romans—who, after all, had

conquered a deal more of earth's surface than we had.

We came in by the gate of Sanata Maria del Popolo, where the whole Pontifical Court and all the ambassadors of foreign powers were assembled to welcome the conqueror of Imola and Forli; and before he himself came in sight, there had filed into the city a procession calculated—aye, carefully calculated—to give unaccustomed eyes a tremendous impression of his might.

There were no guns, to be sure, and to be sure we owed our Forli success largely to the cannon; but nobody missed them. There were no traitors in the procession, either, and we owed our victories even more to traitors, than to the guns . . .

First went the baggage trains; then came a couple of thousand foot—every man Cesare had been able to spare from garrison-duty, with the best dressed on the outside of the columns. After them, the cavalry of Vitellozzo Vitelli added horseflesh and gilt armor to the spectacle—Vitellozzo sour because the guns thundering from the Castel S. Angelo were not for him; then there were fifty young nobles, most magnificent (and cheapest) troops in the parade; and after them came Cesare, in the midst of a gorgeous bodyguard, himself dressed plainly in black velvet and gold chain, as I had seen him that first evening, at his mother's.

That was a shrewd touch—humility of the great Duke. The Duke had laughed about it on the road to Rome, calling the black suit his *non nobis, Domine*—"not unto us, O Lord, be the glory."

Ha!

I, robed as a physician, rode just behind him with other members of his household, and on our heels came a hundred halberdiers. In their midst, the Countess Caterina Sforza, a prisoner.

She, for all the glitter of steel and the tramp of horses and the fluttering of standards and the rumbling of the plunder-carts, was the most noticeable puppet in the show. Cesare had spared no pains for her. Proud and untameable she looked by nature; but *he* had insisted that she wear her richest clothes, *he* had mounted her on a nobler horse than he rode himself, *he* had surrounded her with the ladies who had attended her at Forli—and for this entrance into Rome he had joined her wrists together with golden manacles.

As the Emperor Aurelian had shackled Zenobia, Queen of Palmyra, for his triumph a thousand years before . . .

They say the Pope wept with joy when from the windows of the Vatican he beheld this apotheosis of his son.

And there was matter for weeping.

I do not mean the matter I had in mine own heart—that concerned only me. In all joyous Rome, who else should care that a slim girl lay dead—aye, and under the cold, wet earth by this time—three hundred miles to the north?

Not Cesare, for certain.

RAISED to the rank of Captain of the Church, magnificently promoted to that office of Gonfalonier for which he had slain his brother—he seemed to have no time save for the mighty and for the very low indeed. My main duty (he'd told me) had been to furnish low conversation, like Leonardo da Vinci—Leonardo was in Rome now, also, but our master saw neither of us. Nay—when he was not proceeding in state from this embassy to that, or in state receiving this or that Cardinal or potentate, Cesare was—behaving like a common soldier on a furlough.

It was at this time that he chopped off the bull's head with one blow from a spontoon. The populace cheered him for that, and licked admiring lips over tales of—more private prowesses. Someone extended the legends to take in His Grace's sister Lucrezia and the Holy Father—there was the story of the chestnut supper, and that other tale about the stallions and the mare.

And one morning there was another man found in an alleyway, with his tongue and right hand nailed to a neighboring door.

"Thy work?" asked a physician of the suite of the Cardinal Farnese. Heartsick of courts, I had turned to my brothers by profession; this was a senior among them.

"Mine? This mutilation?"

The old man cackled.

"Oh, flare not up at me, Master Torella! *We* know thee, here in Rome. We've read thy book—those of us who could stay awake. And we've heard of thee—ha ha! Mercury is a cure, eh? We laughed over that. A lot of wealthy churchmen have been cured since thou entered the Duke's service. Cured of living. Ha, ha!"

"But sir—but, sir—"

"Oh, but me not!" snarls the oldster, ferocious. "Hast kept thy skirts clean, very like. Better men than thou are to do the dangerous work—Italians—and be hanged for it. Like my old friend the Doctor Matazzaro, God rest his soul! While thou that put these other Spaniards up to their poisoning, roll in wealth."

I stared at him spellbound, and I suppose he thought I was pickling his words for presentation to the Pope. Of a sudden, fear overcame his jealousy—for evidently he was jealous of this wealth I had never had, while seemingly condemning the crime I had never done—and from fury he turned to fawning.

"I know well," says he, with hardly a pause, "that a young man must make his way in the world—hee hee!—and perhaps all we old fogies can hope is that our juniors, brighter than we, may perhaps extend a helping hand—"

This was too much, by God! Now I understood a multitude of hints, of little slights, of knowing glances that had befallen me whenever I had gone among doctors in Rome. Innocent as any babe unborn, I was known as the poison-monger of the Borgias!

I remembered the Bishop of Ceuta; I recalled the taunt of Naldi at Imola—"the Pope hath poisoned enough rich Cardinals"—with my healing mercury, belike, commended under my name in that book of which I'd been so proud, and dedicated to a Borgia!

Well, I'd have no more of it. I would see Cesare before I slept, and—

I saw him about midnight, at which hour, by common report, he was usually rollicking (masked and with an armed guard) through the stews and bawdy-houses of the city. I had scarce seen him for a month or more, but he received me as though I'd been in his pocket all the time, and listened without anger to my torrent of complaint.

HE nodded occasionally as I stormed on, his arched fingertips under his chin as he was used to hold them.

And at the end looked at me, smiling.

"Well, Gaspare—the question is, what else did thou expect? Cut the tongue out of that slanderer last night, didn't thou—by rumor?"

"It is very well for Your Grace—" I burst forth.

"By the way," he interrupted, "da Vinci wants to draw thy head. He's painting a picture for the Vatican, wants thee for one of the innocents—that were slaughtered—I should think . . . Very well for My Grace, is it? And what hath rumor been saying of *me?*"

I thought, but I dared not say, that truth was very different from—

"That I spend my days in vanity and my nights in debauchery, eh?" says the Duke. "And thou'st believed it, I can see that. It might be as well—by God, yes! Sit thee down in that chair, Master Doctor. Sit there and see and listen—and speak not a word until I ask thine opinion. To be scorned in my own household—by Gabriel his trumpet, it is too much!"

He rang a bell, and I quaked. I had done well enough in two battles, to be sure, but before the ice-fire in my master's eyes—well, I was not brave.

When a servant appeared, however, he ordered only that "the legate from Urbino should be admitted forthwith, and the others in order."

"Thou'lt see how I employ my nights—while thou'rt asleep," he muttered. And then, as a tall man was shown into the room: "Well, Signore Pazzi? And what says our good cousin of Urbino?"

The legate looked unhappy.

"The Duke Guidobaldo says that if he could be sure—" he began doubtfully.

"Am I to be called a liar?"

"N-no, Your Highness."

"Then he *may* be assured of what I've told him—as to the safety of his State.

If he will lend me his cannon, I will not attack him, for all that he owes money to the Holy See, and I will not permit any other State to do so. Now—do I get the guns?"

"Y-yes, Sire."

"Ten bombards, three cannon, six dragonetti and seventeen falconets," says the Duke, reading from a paper before him on the desk. "Is that the muster?"

"Yes, Your Grace."

"Then—my compliments to my Lord Duke of Urbino, and tell him I hope to see him soon. Good-night, Signore Pazzi."

A regiment of artillery—in so few words as that! But no, there must have been long negotiations; I began to see what Cesare had been doing with his time. Nevertheless, I was still dazed—as also must Signore Pazzi have been, on his way down the corridor—when another gentleman was shown into the cabinet.

"From Forli?" snaps the Duke. "Well?"

THE man, a solid merchant or some such, launced into a long and grievous story whose details, after all these years, escape me. But its upshot was that Forli and Imola could both thrive nobly henceforth—but for the ill-will and malfeasance of the folk of Faenza.

"Have I not sent you a good Governor—Signore de Lorqua, no less?"

The man's eyes shuttled.

"Yes, Sire, and Signore de Lorqua hath laid down a marvellous system for our commerce. But Faenza not being under his rule, they practice against us in the markets, Your Highness. Not having our taxes to pay, they undersell us—"

"Meaning that Signore de Lorqua—that my rule—hath done you harm?"

"Nay, nay, my lord!" gasps the man, terrified. " 'Tis only that with these new taxes, and this new system that some of us do not understand, Faenza—"

"Do ye trust me, there in Forli?"

"Yes, yes, Your Grace!"

"Then begone and tell your fellows that if Faenza—or any other town—doth wrong to any folk of mine, 'twill not be for long. Not for long, mark you. I say no more. Is that sufficient?"

"Yes, Sire."

"Then begone!"

It was Vitellozzo Vitelli the *condottiere* who came in next, hangdog and insolent as ever—and with him two others of the same trade, but worse, to wit, Oliverotto da Fermo, who murdered his uncle, and Gianpaolo Baglioni, that most accursed man.

But Cesare smiled on them.

"Well, gentles," says he, "ye've consulted. Are my terms to your liking?"

"Yes," says Oliverotto, "providing that—"

"*I'll* talk here," growls Vitelli. "You might ask us to be seated, Borgia!"

"True. So I might," says Cesare—without doing it. "You were about to say, Signore da Fermo, that providing—providing what?"

"I mean," says the free-lance, "what guarantee have we that this plan of your lordship's can be carried out? Granted the guns from Urbino, and granted that with our troops and the French you can take pretty much what Italian territory you like—"

"Well?"

"Well—to becoming Pope is still a long step."

In my chair I sat bolt upright as though I'd been stabbed. Cesare to become Pope!

He smiled over his joined fingertips, quite cool.

"Ye know I was formerly a Cardinal?" says he. "And will admit that my—his present Holiness cannot live forever? He's nearly seventy now."

"What we *don't* know—" growls Vitelli.

"Was I speaking to thee, Captain? I thought not . . . Signore da Ferma will likewise admit that when the next election comes, the candidate sponsored by the Republic of Venice will certainly be made Pope?"

"So it's said."

"And said truly. And whom should the Republic more likely support than myself—who alone of all the candidates shall be inscribed on the Golden Book?"

"Aha, but I know how ye got that

honor!" snarls Vitelli, who had been after it himself, and been refused. "Did ye not get it by promising that with all your troops and everything else, you'd back a Venetian for Pope? Come now, tell the truth for once?"

"But when I am inscribed in the Golden Book," says Cesare softly, "shall I not be a Venetian myself?"

They stared at him speechless for a moment, and then Gianpaolo said admiringly: "Well, curse me!"—and laughed. And then Oliverotto slapped his thigh, and in a moment they were roaring with mirth. Even Vitellozzo Vitelli cracked an evil smile.

The only sober face in the room was my own.

Cesare as Pope!

HE stood up.

"Then we're agreed, gentlemen, I take it. And since you too have business, no doubt—until such time as we shall march together—"

They went, and old Pietro, putting his face in at the door, said that others who had been waiting were gone for refreshment, but would return anon.

"I told them to go," says the old servant defiantly. "I'll not have Your Grace missing supper this night too."

"Very well, Pietro. Not too much . . . Well, Gaspare? Dost begin to see what I'm after—and how much work it entails? I shall not be abed till dawn this morning. We must be marching north again by autumn."

"Under favor—"

"Oons, yes, go on! What?"

"Under favor, Sire, why must—Your Grace—be Pope?"

Now Cesare laughed.

"So that's what sticks in thy crop! Why, look you, Gaspare, religion's one thing, and formerly no doubt it was enough. But today, the Pope must be a powerful prince of this world. Look—look!"—and he went over again to that map of Italy I'd seen two years before—"here and here and here are tyrants who have stolen lands and then set one tyranny against another. Thou heard that man from Forli who was here: Faenza is raising a barrier against their goods—Urbino hath ruinous duties on wool and silk from Florence—"

The door opened. I expected Pietro to enter, but nay, it was Vanozza de' Catanei, that broad-faced peasant who was Cesare's mother. With a nod to him, and a wave that he should go on with his discourse, she sat down on a couch, took off her shoes and disposed herself to listen.

Cesare seemed somewhat abashed.

"And so it is all over Italy," says he, without the fire of his beginning. "There's but one answer, Gaspare, to all this rivalry, this throat-cutting in war and trade. There must be one reasonable system throughout the land. And that means, one ruler over all the lesser rulers; and the only ruler that offers is—myself."

"So thou'd be Pope after thy father," says his mother, wagging her head.

"Look you, Gaspare! Thou knowest—I know—the merits of thy medicine. Properly used, 'tis a cure for the curse of the age. What has befallen? In Bologna and Padua they laugh at thee, I hear; in Rome, thou tellest me, thou'rt held up as a poisoner. Would it not be a boon to mankind if such quibbling and malice were forbidden? If all doctors, everywhere, were forced to follow thee who know better in this matter than they do?"

"Indeed!" says I, all aglow.

"What is this cure?" asked Vanozza de' Catanei in her highland brogue. "Will it help my sore ankles?"

Cesare regarded her comically.

"I hope not, mother," says he, with a wink—a wink!—at me.

"Then 'tis not worth killing lots of poor folk for," says the old woman, "as I suppose thou wilt, before thee gets thy new world in order. If thee ever does. Folks are apt to love their old world. Pretty fiercely, too."

"A fine world to love!" says Cesare. "Look at it!"

"I *have* looked at it," says his mother, her head on one side. "Longer than thou hast, Cesare. And I've found that folk like their own old customs, no matter how bad they may seem to *thee*—so long as they're theirs. Like my taking my shoes off when I sit down. When I was

a girl, there were wild horses near our village. And a man went catching 'em, and he put 'em into proper stables and kept 'em warm and fed 'em mash and grain instead of the grass and acorns they'd been half-starving on; got 'em right sleek and fit to draw his wagons—and then one day he turned his back a minute, and his tame horses kicked him to death and ran back to their hills."

"Horses are not men," says Cesare. "Men are reasonable."

"Ha?" says his mother. "Well—thee'll see. Thee'll find out."

Her face, theretofore creased into a thousand smiling wrinkles, seemed suddenly ironed out.

"You can begone, young man," says the Duke's mother. "I want a few words in private with my son."

CHAPTER XIV

THE LIBERATOR

WHAT a strange household of lunatics were we who stood closest to Cesare Borgia in his next campaigns!

I, at the time, considered myself eminently sane, yet it was my sure hope (encouraged by Cesare) to establish mine own system of medicine throughout Italy, and to abolish the French evil, malaria, influenza and the plague before starting to reform medical teaching in the universities.

I was clear as to the madness of Girolamo di Trano, the priest who wanted to make Italy into St. Augustine's City of God—but he had an astonishing power to make country-folk see Cesare as architect of the said City, so I did not wonder at his employment.

Then there was Michele da Corella, who had been Michele the bravo, but who now blossomed as a soldier who believed with all his heart that every mother's son everywhere should spend some time in the army—"to knock the nonsense out of 'em," he'd say when I would ask him why, "keep 'em from listening to that rubbish of the Bishop's."

He meant Girolamo di Trano, of whom he was very jealous—almost as jealous as Ramiro de Lorqua was of him. It was de Lorqua's passionate faith, that private men ought not to deal in grain or meat or suchlike necessaries, but that the State should set up shop and sell these things. Further, he would not have let men engage themselves in trades or professions at random, because they chose, or even because their fathers had been weavers or goldsmiths or what not before them. Nay, youths were to be told what was needed and set to work making it, and trades were to be divided among towns so that there should be no rivalry. Ramiro said that if men could be forced to trade peacefully together, there would be no need for Corella's soldiering, and that Italy would become that earthly heaven Girolamo di Trano was howling about—but nevertheless he hated Girolamo di Trano.

Mad, mad! We were all mad!

And Cesare Borgia, turning our delusions to his own account, condoned and nurtured them—so long as they served his purpose.

What befell when these fantasies passed bounds, I was to see in the case of Signore de Lorqua, at Christmas of the year 1502.

He had been Governor of Forli, as I have told, and had done very well there. Then, after Pandolfo Malatesta had signed over Rimini, Sarsina and Medola to us (for eight thousand ducats—what a bargain!) de Lorqua had reorganized the industry of those towns and given them self-respect instead of their former abjection. He had done the like for Pesaro, after that town had acclaimed Cesare its tyrant in preference to Giovanni Sforza.

Now—in this winter of 1502—there was a famine at Cesena, which had always been loyal, and, what was consequent and worse, a threat of rebellion. So Cesare had sent de Lorqua thither, to distribute cheap grain certainly; but (he was a very stern man, this Ramiro) at all costs to put down the revolt.

Cesare was busy at that time (as I shall tell in its proper place) with that conspiracy of the *condottieri* which threatened to deprive him at one blow of all his conquests; and he had no leisure for ordinary rioters. Which made it surprising to me that he should suddenly take horse, four days before the

Nativity of Our Savior, and ride to Cesena post-haste. Michele da Corella went with him, for a purpose that will be apparent; so did I, because nowadays I went everywhere with the Duke. Leonardo da Vinci, once after he had quarrelled with His Grace, said 'twas the first time he'd seen a black man with a white shadow.

I think he was mad, too—like most artists.

WELL, what Ramiro de Lorqua had done, I never knew exactly. All I do know is that on Christmas Eve (after Cesare had heard divers complaints from the townspeople) Ramiro was brought into the Duke's presence and by him most strictly questioned before us—as to the prices he had paid for the grain, the price for which he had sold it, and also as to the communications he had had with Vitellozzo Vitelli, Oliverotto da Fermo and the other disaffected free-lances. Cesare announced no decision, passed no sentence.

But the next morning, going to Mass before we should resume our journey to Sinigaglia, I beheld a great crowd in the square before the church. And in the midst of the crowd, I found a scaffold, and on the scaffold I found what was left of Ramiro de Lorqua—a body dressed in all the panoply of Governorship, even to jewelled gloves on the hands, but with its bearded head looking down on it admiringly from the top of a neighboring pike.

Into a chopping block beside the chair in which the late Governor sat, was stuck the bloody hatchet that had slain him, and on it was nailed a label:

OPPRESSOR OF THE PEOPLE

Michele da Corella, who had been executioner, laughed as we rode from the city and said *that* showed what befell men for lack of soldierly discipline. The Duke, cool and calculating, asked me did I not think Ramiro's execution would raise his popularity—I mean, the Duke's—in the Romagna; and (remembering that old woman at Forli, after the hanging of the fifty Swiss) I said I thought it would.

And it did. The common folk regarded Cesare now more than ever as their protector; the great people feared him more cringingly than before; and I found even the doctors (who, as the Duke had said, are neither high nor low) much more amenable than they had been, to my lectures on the prevention of fever.

But heigho—and I am ahead of my story.

By this time we had taken Urbino—in flat defiance of Cesare's promise—chasing the mild Duke Guidobaldo from his capital with his own guns. We had made a sally against Piombino and taken it, the Duke proving himself as good an admiral as he was a great captain ashore.

We had destroyed Fossate with fire, plunder and rape—that was in the early days, when Cesare wished to strike terror into the countryside and the *condottieri* still dared to insist on their right to loot.

Camerino had come into our hands by treachery. So had Capua, when we went down to Naples on the lightning war against Federigo. So, as I have said before, had Rimini and its dependent towns been sold to us—I cannot at this distance determine which method of his lordship's added most territory to his growing domains; his profligacy of bribes or the astounding speed and savagery of his assaults-at-arms.

It was a little Florentine named Michiavelli—secretary to one of the ambassadors—who first likened Cesare's attack to lightning. " 'Tis so swift," says he, "but what's more—none can ever tell where it will strike. Lightning war!"

The words stuck in my memory—probably the only words of his that anyone will remember, poor insignificant little man!

Lightning war!

But it did not succeed against Faenza.

THAT, it may be recalled, was the town where we had sojourned after that first conquest of Imola, the town Cesare had pointed out to me as a model of government, and to whose young lord

Astorre he had sworn eternal friendship.

It was early in the campaign to spread model government over all the land, that the Duke discovered Faenza was cramping the trade of his own towns Imola and Forli—and that, besides, it flanked any further advance he might make to the north.

"Do I lack my Gaspare's approval?" says Cesare to me mockingly, after he had sent an ultimatum to Astorre.

"There was a promise, Sire."

"Aye—and what's the function of a promise, save to be broken? I'm not jesting, Gaspare. The fact that one *must* promise whatever-it-may-be shows that the matter in question is one of will and circumstances, not of nature. *Exemplum gratis:* I do not promise thee that I will go on breathing or that I will deny myself the pleasure of having six legs—such are matters of nature and will take care of themselves. On the other hand, I may promise that I will be a good lord to thee—and I do. But only so long as thou shalt be a good and loyal servant to me. Such are matters of will and circumstance, and as they change, promises must be modified to match. Is not that evident?"

I had at least no immediate answer.

"In any case," said the Duke ere I could get my wits to working. "Why this tenderness for Astorre Manfredi? He's too old to be thy son, and since thy mother was never out of Spain that I know of—"

"His people love him," I said hastily, before His Highness could sting me to worse words. He seemed to think that because his own mother—

"Then if they love *him*, who governs them thus badly, at least as regards their relations with Forli," says my lord, "think how much more they will love *me!* What else? Come, come! No noble ever had such an advocate as thee, for nothing."

"He—he induced Your Grace," I muttered, "to let me use the courier—to write—to Agata."

"Agata? Oh, that girl of thine. But oons! Gaspare, in a world busy as this, with thy career ahead of thee, thou'rt not still moping over her?"

"I fear I am, Your Grace."

"Then thou'd better stop it," says Cesare irritably. "Dost hear me? Is thine the only trouble in the world? How many homes have been broken—aye, and lovers worse hurt than if their girls had died—in these tyrannies that lie ahead of us? I've a Duchess myself in France—and a daughter too—that won't come hither to me because I'm a man of blood, forsooth, a soldier and a murderer and—and everything else liars call me. Am *I* mooning about like a sick cat? Nay—and no more shalt thou!"

Nevertheless, and for all his sending me back to soldiering, I did think often and sadly of Agata, as I would make the nightly rounds of the pickets before Faenza, or lie sleepless in my tent while the cannons fired in the dawn.

AND for all my efforts in that lamentable siege, not a crack was made in the resistance of Faenza until we had been about its walls six months. The walls were cracked often enough, God knows, but not the people. Once we brought a whole tower down and should have been into the city through that breach, had not the women of the town flung themselves against the storming-column and beaten it back handsomely with kitchen knives and scalding water. O those viragos! I remember one of them who seized me bodily and flung me into a corner behind wrecked masonry and told me I was too nice a lad for such doings, and ought to have been better brought up. But her strength lay not merely in her tongue; nay, seeing a great bearded sergeant coming at her with the evident intention of killing her, woman or no, she turned from me and gave a yell like a demon and knocked his brains all over the glacis with a piece of firewood.

Cesare, having inquired of me what chiefly brought about the spread of pestilence, rigged a catapult in the old style and with it flung dead horses and all sorts of filth over the walls into the city. We had more men's corpses than dead horses—the citizens would persist in making hopeless sorties, shouting "A Manfredi, a Manfredi!" for their young lord; but Cesare would not throw back these remains, because he thought it

might make him unpopular with the townsfolk afterwards.

"They'll forgive slaying," says he, "but there are things they never will forgive, and mangling the bodies of their fallen is one of 'em. I don't know why. People are fools."

As for me, I had thought that perhaps the besieged might manage to scratch some few meals out of the horseflesh—the weather was cold, and it rotted not too quickly. But soon Cesare thought of that—he thought of everything!—and we flung no more horses.

Just filth.

And so the siege went on. It was said—I think untruly, for our blockade was tight enough to catch mice—that food had been smuggled into the city from a valley some miles away. The Duke sent *marraiuoli* — mattock-men — and laid the valley waste. Then he shot cross-bow bolts into the town, telling what he had done and announcing that for every further month the siege lasted he would devastate another section of farming land, so that at last Faenza should stand in the midst of a desert.

The citizens on the walls became thinner and paler, and fewer and more wan, from October to Christmas, from Christmas to the New Year, in budding March, and from March on into April. Yet still they fought like tigers whenever we tried to exploit one of the breaches made by the guns, and still they would lift their voices in the ghost of a cheer, when young Astorre would come among them. He must have been as weak and hungry as his people, yet he made the regular round of the battlements and at sound of his progress (he was kept very well out of sight) Cesare's eyes would glow evilly.

"Wasting their cheers and affections on that young lout!" says he once—for, having wronged Astorre, now of course he hated him.

The Bishop was standing by — the mad one, Girolamo, who thought he was Saint Augustine.

"Their love should be all for thee, eh, my son?" he asked slyly.

"And why not? What army hath *he* ever led, what benefits hath *he* ever promised them? What—"

THE Bishop shrugged his shoulders.

"Love, my son, goes not by reason."

"No?" says Cesare hotly, but he could not confute that saying.

Alack, who can? Who ever could?

"Then I think," says he, after a moment, "we will see what *doth* go by reason. Treachery, perhaps. M'yes. I think we will shoot cross-bow bolts here as we did at Forli, offering some little reward. How much would seem reasonable, think you, Gaspare? How much in cash for the faithful city?"

Somewhat sick at soul, I suggested a hundred thousand ducats—and was banished to my tent in disgrace.

And justly so, for a measly five hundred florins sufficed to bring a dyer named Gramante, over the wall and into our encampment.

He knew a weak place in the walls—why must the walls of free cities have always one weak spot in them?—and it had not been breached. So 'twas not as savagely guarded as the rubble we had blown down.

"They'll send reinforcements," says Gramante, leering up from a bowl of thick, rich soup, "but we—but they're too weak from hunger to run very fast, or swing their swords very hard. And there's no more gunpowder."

The bombardment and our assault and our taking of the city, were something like the similar events at Forli; I will not spoil more paper with the details.

But the incident I remember here is not the cutting of another boy's throat for his ransom; something more cheerful—in a way.

It concerns this Gramante, by whose treachery we had taken Faenza, and against whom the populace raged continually and furiously from the time we marched in. When Cesare proposed to give him his five hundred ducats of blood-money at a window of the Manfredi Palace—the infuriated people even then filling the square and howling like a pack of wolves—I thought His Grace was mad.

But—as ever—he knew his business. He himself handed over the gold

pieces to the traitor with a smile, asked him if he was satisfied and if the bargain had been fulfilled, and, on being told yes, turned to the grim old provost-marshal who stood at his elbow.

"In that case, Gian," says my lord, "take me this scoundrel now and hang him from this balcony. In good view of his former friends. He leaves them his five hundred ducats; when he's dead, fling it among them."

When we were out of earshot of the man's shrieking, and of the still worse cackling laughter of the crowd, Cesare put his arm about my shoulders and laughed.

"How now, Gaspare? Will not my new people of Faenza love me for this?"

They did.

But not (to his taste) quite enough.

That was why, a year later, Astorre Manfredi and his half-brother were strangled in the Castel Sant' Angelo.

CHAPTER XV

HIS MAJESTY!

COULD I have foreseen such a foul deed as yon, I should have left Cesare Borgia, at whatever peril to mine own life, that day. Between the life of the body and that of the soul, I should have chosen the latter, I hope.

But who ever is offered such a choice outright? Damnation creeps up on one unrecognised, and so I could not know.

On the contrary I was persuaded, when I had stamped out the plague at Castel Bolognese (this was just afterward) that I was engaged in noble work, even as Cesare told us perpetually we all were—all, even the *condottieri,* that pack of slavering hounds. They, however, had the sense not to believe him; they were hard men, well-accustomed to the pretenses of princes, and they were quite clear in their minds that their thoughts and their swords were for themselves.

Even so, Cesare had after a fashion seduced them into his service. It must be remembered that by the end of 1502, when his conquests were almost complete and he had added to his title of Valentinois, the rank of Duke of the Romagna, he was master of almost all the free-lances of the north, some of whom at least could have been earning better pay from other employment.

The Republic of Florence was bidding (for instance) for the troops of Oliverotto da Fermo, but Florence had beheaded the brother of Vitellozzo Vitelli, and Vitelli threatened to fire on Oliverotto, if he marched. Venice would have engaged Vitellozzo's column, but Cesare was a citizen of Venice, as I've said, and his influence caused the negotiations to fall through. Gianpaolo Baglioni—but I need not multiply instances. They were a pride of panthers, held by Cesare in a leash woven of their own lusts and hatreds; and they won a kingdom for him, all the time yearning to turn and rend their keeper.

We heard that they had met and made a conspiracy at Magione—Cardinal Orsini's castle near Perugia. It was that little Florentine, Machiavelli, that told us the news, and I remember how his bright mouse-eyes watched Cesare at the telling.

"The Diet of Magione, they call themselves?" says His Grace, laughing. "Damned poor diet they'd have, but for me. A conspiracy of bankrupts!"

The little joke was for Machiavelli to remember and to tell his Florentine Signoria. Cesare had an art—it was almost a science—of making memorable such things as he desired to be remembered; it might be by a quip, as in the present case, or maybe by an outburst of apparent rage, during which he would act like a maniac. Afterwards, he would laugh and ask me was he not a good mime, and boast that he could play upon human feelings as lesser men could play upon the lute.

I have told how he bedazzled the French by razing a rope-walk for his landing at Marseille; I have shown how he masked defeat, and made the Roman rabble regard him as a conqueror, by the device of leading Caterina Sforza in chains of gold. And I wish I had space to tell how he tamed a whole bevy of ambassadors after we'd seized Urbino—received them in the late Duke's library atop a sheer cliff. It made one giddy to

look down from its windows upon the plain.

"I want 'em to feel like lambs in the grip of a soaring eagle," said Cesare before the envoys were admitted, "for oons! that's what they are!"

AND that is how they had behaved—but no such tricks would avail against our rebellious *condottieri*. Nay, they were familiars of Cesare's puppet show, they had been behind the curtain.

I thought Machiavelli had this in mind as he stood looking at the Duke; he was a shrewd little fellow, for all he looked like a merchant's clerk.

"It must be remembered that these five captains—"

"Francesco Orsini," says Cesare, counting on his fingers, "Paolo and Fabio of that ilk, Gianpaolo Baglioni and Vitellozzo Vitelli — do I understand you?"

"The same," says Machiavelli, startled (as the Duke had intended he should be) at this knowledge. "I—I was about to say, Your Highness—"

"That they have—let's see, five, six —some ten thousand troops, while I shall be left with three thousand or so?"

"Some such consideration had crossed my mind, Your Grace."

"Y'are well informed, *signore*. What thou dost *not* know, however, is that Paolo Orsini was here this very day, offering me a loyalty without equal in the world, in return for the lordship of the city of Fano."

This was true, as to the visit, and the Florentine knew it. What had passed at the interview, he did not know. Nor did I.

"Whereas," says Cesare contemptuously, "Gianpaolo Baglioni was here some days ago, betraying all his fellow-conspirators to me, in the hope I'd relax the Church's claims to Perugia."

This was a lie—Gianpaolo Baglioni was ill in his bed, twenty miles away, and I had been over to attend him. And he had refused my ministrations, bawling that he might die of his disease, but that he would not be poisoned by Cesare Borgia, not he.

"Then Your Maj— Your Grace is not alarmed?" says Machiavelli, wondering.

Cesare looked piercingly at him, and smiled.

"I am obliged to thee for the slip of the tongue, *signore*," says he. "Perhaps one day— Meantime, no, I am not alarmed. Except perhaps by some rumors of unrest at Urbino—which may have come to your ears also?"

It had been a bloody revolt, with the folk murdering our garrison and demanding back their Duke Guidobaldo.

"It will doubtless please your Excellent Signoria of Florence," says the Duke, picking up a dispatch from his table, "to learn that the sad unrest hath been put down and the Castle of S. Leo retaken—with some bloodshed and hangings, alas!—by Vitellozzo Vitelli, who was head and front of the conspiracy against me, I think Your Excellency thought."

The Florentine retired, dumbfounded by a truth (and Cesare showed him the dispatch) which was indeed no truth at all. Vitelli had, to be sure, retaken S. Leo and also Cagli in Urbino, but he had taken them for himself. And all the other captains were in like fashion disposing themselves to occupy towns or territory in Cesare's name—or the Pope's, no matter—with intent to appropriate the same.

"After they've murdered me," says the Duke to Michele da Corella, whom he had called from the *campagna* to consult.

MICHELE nodded as if that were a matter of course.

"I hear Vitelozzo Vitelli hath sworn to strangle me with his own hands," says Cesare lazily. "Well—we shall see. But look, Michele: this scheme of thine—forced military service, training peasants willy-nilly—will it work?"

"If it doth not, Your Grace can strangle *me* with *his* own hands," says Michele eagerly. "I would explain, Sire—"

Cesare waved his hands at him.

"I've heard it all—I've heard it all! Talking-time's past. Go raise thy yokel army."

"To what number?" asks Michele, all aglow.

"Any number you've arms for," says the Duke. "Bill-hooks will do, so long as they'll stand together and use 'em. I want five thousand men ready to march, within two months."

Michele's face fell.

"Within two months!"

"Well?"

"Sire, I can have them, but bethink you—to stand up against such troops as the captains have—old seasoned fighters, and cavalry too—"

"Begone, begone!" says Cesare. "They'll stand up well enough if I lead 'em."

But when Corella had withdrawn, his face was grave. According to his habit, he had a map of Italy on the wall of his room, and now, putting his arm about my shoulders (which was also his habit) he led me over to this and stood staring. It took many, many of the colored nails now to mark the territories he ruled; the whole heart of the country was in his hands.

"But for these rats—" he muttered through his teeth. "Gaspare, didst hear how that Florentine started to call me Your Majesty?"

He nodded and patted my shoulder and walked back to his desk.

"It may be, too. First, though," he said. "I must spend some little time as a rat-catcher."

WHICH brings me to January of the year 1503, and to the affair of Sinigaglia—"the beautiful stratagem" it was called then, by people who, a year later, had quite other names for it.

As for me, writing near forty years afterwards, I say what I said then: God pity and forgive both traitors and betrayed, and look down with mercy on that bloody deed!

In the months between October and Christmas, there had been comings and goings and conferences and councils of a number and complexity I had never known before. All that stick in my memory are Cesare's meeting with the King of France—he wore his robes as a Knight of St. John of Jerusalem and looked far more kingly than did Louis XII—and then, an entertainment he gave for the ambassadors from Venice. It was midwinter, but he gave them summer fruits—and the upshot of it was that Venice told the conspirators that they must row their own gondola or sink and be damned to them.

Michele da Corella came in often, with great news of his recruiting. Our wars had laid waste the countryside until any able-bodied man was willing to shoulder arms, so long as he could fill his belly. And once he had had his first rations, of course it was a case of drill or be stabbed.

Yet, as Cesare's strength grew, both in the field and in politics, so did he become more and more submissive to the rebels! When his strength was almost equal to theirs—in numbers at least—he even made a treaty with them. Yes, with Vitellozzo Vitelli, who had threatened to strangle him and had thumbed his nose at summonses to meet the Duke at Imola.

That Florentine, Machiavelli, came aghast to know what this portended against Florence—the Republic had beheaded Vitellozzo's brother, as I've said; and thought Cesare might be buying back Vitelli by promising him revenge.

"No," says Cesare. "The fact is, *signore*, that I must have the county of Sinigaglia—'tis in the midst of all my conquests, and until I have it and all its little castles, I am insecure. And to take it, I must have help—at whatever cost. So—"

He shrugged and spread his hands—and laughed when Machiavelli had scurried from the room.

"Doesn't think as much of me as he did before," says the Duke. "Well—"

On Christmas, as I have told before, we were at Cesena, chopping off the head of Ramiro de Lorqua. We paused at Fano to receive news of the conquest of the Sinigaglia country by the rebels—rebels no more, said Cesare as we rode onward, and never (he was sure) to rebel against him again.

AND on the last day of December, we came to Sinigaglia itself.

"We are in considerable force," says the Duke to me, surveying

the army of Corella's forces that lay before the town. "And who will be so amazed as I, to learn that the town is ready to surrender. That it hath indeed surrendered already, by order of my new friend the Cardinal della Rovere?"

It boded ill for someone, that he should speak so jocund. I did not quite understand him.

"To my amazement," he went on, "Vitelli and his friends must have occupied the town unexpectedly—with their little armies—the few men they could spare from the garrisons in the countryside. Well, well! How glad am I that they are rebels no longer! How thankful that they will never rebel against my rule again!"

All this speech he had delivered mockingly, with a sidewise eye on me. At the end, as for the second time he said he was sure the rebels would rebel no more, his voice dropped from one note to quite another. So when a dog hath a bone, he growls in one key, but when his meal is threatened, he growleth a tone lower, and his hair bristleth. So dropped Cesare's voice—but it was my hair that bristled.

As for him, he laughed. And was still laughing—a gay carefree figure in full armor (we had heard that a cross-bowman might shoot at him) when he rode in to meet his captains in the city square.

It is a small town, Sinigaglia, without much space for the quartering of troops, wherefore most of the free-lance troops were in the *borgo,* outside. So, of course, were most of Cesare's, but they were under arms, and the length of the procession of the Duke's escort was such that its tail was still in the city gate, keeping it open on the side where his army lay, when he himself rode into the square.

Four of the rebels were there to meet him—Gianpaolo Baglioni was still sick, lucky man!—and Oliverotto da Fermo had five hundred of his men drawn up in ceremonial array.

The Duke scanned them sharply and seemed annoyed.

"Well, God's wounds, Eufreducci," says he—that had been Oliverotto's name before he murdered his uncle—"this is poor hospitality. Where are my men to billet in the town?" He waited.

I think Oliverotto would have been suspicious of an amiable greeting; so would Vitellozzo Vitelli. They were eyeing Cesare as they might have eyed a snake. This petulance of his put them at their ease; had he meant them harm, he would not have shown his mood so openly—thought they.

As he had known they would!

"I suppose my quarters are not ready, either," says the Duke fretfully, "nor dinner, after all the damned riding I've been doing in this damned weather—"

"Dinner's all ready for thee in the Palazzo Orsini," says Vitellozzo, "and a better one than the last I had from thee, Borgia. Also—there's a treaty to be signed."

"What, another?"

"Aye, another. We want no more of thy slippery tricks with the Venetians and the French King."

Cesare shrugged.

"Very well—but let's get at the food," said he. "I'm starving. Come, my lords."

HE WAS speaking to the four *condottieri,* but there were thirty gentlemen of his own suite, just behind him, and they came too. *I* saw (as we came to the Orsini house) that troops of ours, filing into the town during the colloquy, had surrounded the palace; but the captains—intent on their dinner, maybe, or on their treaty, or perhaps just because God was tired of them—seemed to notice nothing. The little Florentine ambassador, this Machiavelli, was with us; perhaps that added to their assurance. Howbeit, they walked in through the doors of the palazzo entirely at their ease. They had almost reached the staircase at the far end of the hallway—the stair leading to the piano nobile and the banquet—when with a crash the great oak doors were slammed behind them.

"Trapped, by God!" shouts Cesare Borgia, with his fist striking Vitellozzo so that he rolled four ells and lay bleeding. "Seize them, gentlemen!"

And seized they were, and bound like cut-purses (albeit with their own scarves, which were of silk embroidered in gold)

and they were lugged upstairs and—after Cesare had leisurely eaten dinner with his gentlemen—they were tried for treason.

Treason against their lord paramount, Cesare Borgia de France, Duke of Valentinois, Duke of the Romagna, Gonfalonier and Captain-General of Holy Church—he had the indictment all ready, fairly written. And the new treaty in the bosom of Vitellozzo Vitelli was damning evidence.

Not that evidence was needed. The doom of those four men was sealed from the beginning, but it was not until the winter dusk had begun to darken the windows, that Cesare did formally condemn them all to death.

He did it so gently and charmingly that they made no reply, neither screamed at him.

I saw him, as he pronounced the dread words, roll up the furred bordures of his sleeves.

"Master Doctor Torella," says the Duke, "you may retire. And Signore Machiavelli, we have been obliged to you for your company."

As we reached the door, I heard him say in another voice: "Vitellozzo Vitelli, you promised, I think, to strangle me with your own hands . . ."

Now we were both outside in the corridor.

There came to us through the closed door, suddenly, the voice of Vitelli shrieking: "I confess! I appeal to the Pope! I demand—"

The shriek ceased, as though—as though a dreadful grip had closed on that straining throat, and at that moment uprose the cracked bass yelling of Oliverotto—"Mercy, mercy, Mary most merciful—pray for us—"

I thought the little Florentine would be gasping with horror—as I was, but when I looked at him, behold, he was clasping his hands in admiration.

"His Majesty!" says he to himself with shining eyes. "His Majesty!"

(To Be Concluded)

★ ★ ★

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FIRST COMMAND

By WALTER HAVIGHURST

THEY got three boats over while the shells still whistled through the slate-colored sky, bursting aboard the battered ship. With steam in her boilers and way still on her, the abandoned *Selkirk* forged through the dimming sea. The three boats, carrying her well and her wounded, dropped astern. Like thunder a final salvo landed. One shell burst squarely on the stricken tanker. There was a lurid eruption, a shrill and fading sigh. Her boilers were gone. Then a fiery cloud streamed upward. She was burning.

Over the darkening sea a white brilliance flowered. For a moment the *Selkirk* stood up in smoking silhouette against the light-washed sky. It was hellish and beautiful. By the light of star shells the raider was racing after the scattered convoy.

A wind came up, cold and buffeting. In Number Three boat the men huddled together, not speaking, staring with dumb eyes at the crimson cloud of the tanker's burning and the remote white fireworks over the sea. They were dazed with disaster. Half of those fourteen men had been asleep in their bunks when the first salvo landed.

The boat was tossing. Waves slopped hard beneath the gunwales. It rose on a crest and pitched steeply. Another sea rushed past. Water broke over the head sheets. Silently the men edged away from the stem.

A coughing began somewhere along the thwarts. It was a weak and patient coughing, personal, like a man talking to himself. There was no knowing who, in that darkness. Then the cracked voice lifted; it was the chief engineer. They had lowered him, limp, in a cargo sling, after he was carried out of the engine-room.

"Captain Ives!" he was calling. "Captain Ives!"

Somebody bent over him, hands groping in the dark and a voice muttered: "The Old Man ain't here, Chief. He went in Number One."

"Who is in command here? Who is in command?" It was a broken voice, querulous, ragged with pain.

"You are, sir."

In the silence a sea thumped hollowly against the sheer strokes. Water mumbled under the grating. There was a wheezing breath, a loud, throaty sigh from the chief, and his limp form sank onto the bottom boards.

A sailor swore softly. "He's dead."

In the stern sheets Second Mate George Byer felt a throbbing in his tem-

ILLUSTRATED BY I. B. HAZELTON

The bosun swarmed up the ship's side hand over hand.

ples. The tiller kicked, and he was surprised to find his elbow hooked around it. The boat pitched sharply. He jammed the tiller over. When they were in a trough he groped into the gear chest beneath him. At last his numb fingers found the electric torch. He flicked it on and swept the faces huddled between the thwarts. They looked dazed and startled in that beam of light. Empty, rigid faces—an oiler, a cook, a fireman, bosun, steward, a water tender, and a half dozen boys out of the foc'sle. When his fingers flicked the light off he realized it was his command.

The boat tossed drunkenly. He heard a thumping movement. Somebody swore again, through chattering teeth. The chief's limp body was banging against the stretchers.

Second Mate Byer found his voice. "Bosun, take this helm."

He made his way along the gunwale. His torch played for five seconds on the chief's gray face, his staring eyes.

"Here, men. Take hold. Lift him up. Get him over."

"Over—"

His voice was sharper. "Take hold now!"

They obeyed meekly, mechanically. He held the torch on the tossing black water. For a moment there were white bubbles. The spray dashed up, cold in their faces. Before he flicked the light off he saw them shivering. They hadn't enough clothing. Some had come straight from their quarters, pulling on dungarees and a jumper, when the alarm gong went.

Somebody spoke up. "Who's in command?"

Second Mate Byer felt his blood hammering again. "I am."

He played his light over them. "How many wounded? Speak up."

"Splinter in my back. It's easing now."

"My arm. It's out, sir. No feeling at all."

"Burn, on my left side. Up to the shoulder."

"Leg cut up some. Not bad, though."

Somebody coughed. It was the oiler, Andy Brace.

Second Mate Byer held the light on his lean, rigid face, white from the unchanging seasons of the engine-room. His eyes were burning.

"How about you, Brace?"

He coughed again. A short, barking cough, and his voice was hollow.

"Caved in, Mate. Ribs all feel broke."

The cook was seasick, his head hanging over the gunwale, and the steward had a steel splinter in his side.

That left half of them, able-bodied.

"You sailors, break out the canvas back there. You with wounds get down on the bottom boards and cover up. You'll freeze in this air."

When the canvas was stretched under the thwarts he told off the others.

"Bosun, put out the sea anchor. It will hold us in the trough. Dixon and Murch, get on that hand pump. You can spell each other. Keep it working."

With the canvas drag behind them the boat rode the seas, taking little water. He should have had the sea anchor out long before. They had drifted far. Perhaps too far. The *Selkirk* was an angry cone of fire, distant in the black. The other boats—

There was a Very pistol in the gear chest. He fired it and the colored signal looped up into darkness.

"Look sharp, bosun! To starboard. Any answer?"

There was nothing. The cold wind stung his staring eyes. The great sibilant mutter, the somber waste of darkness—that was all.

"Try a red flare," he said.

The bosun found the red lights and tossed one over. It ignited and rode the heaving sea. It dropped into a trough and rose like a beacon on a crest of water, throwing up its tent of crimson light. It died suddenly and the night was black.

"Looks like we're alone, skipper," the bosun said quietly.

"Save your lights, then."

"Yes, sir."

With a kind of terrible, lonely pride Second Mate Byer took the helm. His first command, with a boatload of wounded on a waste of sea. A lump rose hard in his throat. He clamped his teeth together. He had never been a bridge officer until the war began.

THE night was slow to pass. Second Mate Byer wondered about the other boats. He wondered about the convoy, scattering over the horizon while the shells were bursting on the *Selkirk*. He wondered how a vessel's lights would look—not the way they look from a crow's nest or a bridge wing, but different, frantically different. Ceaselessly he searched the dark, and it was empty. He sat there, huddled over the tiller, fighting cold, fighting weariness, fighting fear. He was in command. The rest could be weak or bewildered; he could not. Suddenly he felt old, as old as war, as old as disaster, as old as death itself. And with that he felt a deep sadness, a weight of care. Not for himself, but for those still men around him. He ceased to feel his own weariness and in its place he felt another, a deeper, sterner weariness, the ten-fold weariness of all those others, and their fear. Then he knew he must have the courage for them too. He was making a discovery, the lonely selflessness of command. He searched the dark sea and the dark sky. There were no stars that night.

In the gray daybreak, with the salt rime silvering his face, he was an older man. Some hours leave a lasting mark. Second Officer George Byer had not passed his twenty-sixth birthday, but youth was behind him.

They got the wounded up and chafed the blood to circulating in their stiff arms and legs. One man still huddled against a stanchion. It was nervous little Wilgus, the steward. Not nervous now, but thinner than ever as he lay there in his dirty blue jacket, hollow-cheeked, staring at the sky.

They pulled his coat off silently, before they buried him. He was very light.

When he was gone someone said in a toneless voice: "Bloody odd thing about a steward. Living in the pantry that way you'd think they'd get fat. Always runty chaps."

Nobody touched the blue jacket that lay on the bottom boards.

Second Mate Byer broke out the provision chest and passed the lot around. One portion of naval ration and two sea biscuits. There was a padlock inside the chest. He snapped it over the hasp and buttoned the key inside his tunic. He took the bung out of the water breaker, lashed to the cleats.

"One cup of water around, bosun."

They ate their ration slowly, and when it was gone they stared over the sea. The wind was still fresh, Force 3, Second Mate Byer thought, entering it in his notebook with cold-stiffened fingers, and the confused seas had lengthened into running furrows. With that motion the sea seemed to spread out, and then to contract, with hypnotic regularity. When they bobbed to a crest every eye scanned the widened water, empty to the gray sky's rim.

"The *Selkirk* must have gone down."

"She was taking water, for'ard, when we left her."

"The other boats—"

"Well, a boat could capsize in this sea."

Around midday the wind went down. Slowly the sea flattened out and they hauled in the sea anchor. It was something to do. And it gave them the sense of getting somewhere. The drift was slow, E. S. E. by the liquid compass.

"We might pull the oars," the bosun said. "There's five, six of us, able-bodied."

Along the thwarts the men sat up rigid. They were ready to pull their arms off.

"Nine hundred miles to Ireland," Second Mate Byer said quietly.

"It'd be moving, though."

"We'll save our strength."

They sank down again, silent. The hand pump sobbed. The wounded were dozing off, slumped against the freeboard.

A man jerked up suddenly. His voice rose. "Abandon ship! Abandon ship, you guineas! You'll be drowned like rats. We're trapped, I tell you. Trapped!"

It was Brace, the oiler, delirious. He sank down, hugging his smashed chest.

"The starboard firemen never got out," the water tender said in a toneless voice.

They didn't look at Andy Brace. He babbled a little and fell silent. They looked at the sea. At every crest their eyes went out grimly, hungrily. They

had a picture, repeated in all their minds, one picture, identical—a smoke stain on the sky, a ship's trailing feather, sharp masts and a raked funnel, a firm dark silhouette against the horizon. But around them was only the immense and lonely sea.

MAYBE the day was worse than the night. It was harder on the mind, to be searching minute by minute, hour after hour. And the pump sobbing slowly.

Murch, the youngster, started a song as he bent to the pump—

They paid us off in Liverpool
Ronzo, boys, Ronzo—

and a couple of others took it up. But their voices were dry and the song trailed off and a wave slapped up suddenly. Dixon swore with quiet bitterness. He was soaked.

"Get that wet jacket off," barked Second Mate Byer, "and put on this dry one."

"Me wear the steward's jacket?" His gray face looked startled.

"Get it off!"

Dixon obeyed slowly.

Before the darkness gathered another entry went into the notebook. *Wind N. N. E., Force 2. Visibility poor. Drifting without sea anchor. Position estimated—57.15 N., 25.40 W.*

"What you writing, skipper?" the bosun asked.

"Log."

"What for?"

"We'll need a record, when we're picked up."

They all avoided each other's eyes.

"Oh—aye. Sure."

The sky blew partly clear with darkness and a few pale stars showed overhead. The wind came colder. The men huddled together. The long night stretched ahead.

There was nothing a commander could do but wonder again how a ship's running lights would look, if any ship dared show her lights at all; and figure secretly how long the naval ration would last; and see the vague white faces in the dark and forget his own cold and the knot of emptiness tightening in his stomach and his sleepless eyes burning.

The few stars were swallowed up. There was a long space of dark and then the clouds opened to a gulf of sky and a half moon shone, cold and white. Now the sea was silvered on the crests and black in the hollows, and the still faces between the gunwales shone with a waxen light.

Suddenly a form raised up from among those sleepers. His eyes swept around and his hand pointed. "A light! A light!"

In an instant they came to life around him.

"Where, Andy? Where?"

The oiler's voice was shrill, breaking. "On the quarter. I saw it. Wait till we lift again."

The boat rose up and the faces were banked there, hungrily, piteously.

In the stern sheets Second Mate Byer's mouth was thin. "You're dreaming, Brace. There isn't any light."

Twice they rose and twice they fell. The moon-silvered sea spread empty around them. Still they stood there, staring, straining, waiting.

"We could pull toward it—toward the quarter."

"We could pull our hearts out," the second mate said quietly. "But there's nothing there."

One by one they settled down again, but it was not the same. A figure would rise up suddenly and stare into the dark. There was something new among them, a nervousness, a distrust, a furtive panic.

A voice began to babble. "They won't leave us adrift out here. They can't. Somebody will come back. Somebody. Somebody—"

"Quiet!" The second mate's voice cracked over them like a lash.

But when they were settled, dozing, or lying quiet, something had gone out of them. He felt it plainly—an emptiness, a beaten emptiness. His eyes ached as he searched the night.

Slowly the moon crossed the gulf of sky and went under. The sea was dark again. The wind died. They bobbed like a slow cradle in the ground swell. Second Mate Byer felt the blackness in his eyes. His lids grew heavy, achingly

heavy. Tomorrow, he thought, he might nap a little. But tonight—

He dipped a hand into the cold sea and rubbed the salt water under his lids. His eyes burned sharply.

With a sudden movement Brace was up again. "There it is! Abeam! Right abeam!"

The men tensed up around him, their voices shrill.

"Abeam!" He repeated. "Throw a flare, why don't you?"

The bosun found a flare and tossed it out. It struck not ten feet away and ignited. The boat rose and fell in that bloody light. A lurid brilliance washed the staring faces.

"Where, Andy? Where?"

There was a glassy burning in the oiler's eyes, and the red glare threw deep shadows under his cheeks.

"Abeam, I tell you! Right abeam!"

Second Mate Byer crossed the thwarts. "Brace," he said, "keep still."

"There!" the oiler barked. One hand hugged his injured chest; the other pointed. "Don't you—"

The second mate's fist shot out. It landed with a sharp thud on the point of that white chin. The oiler's head snapped back. The second mate caught him and laid him back on the bottom boards. He saw the men watching him with twisted angry mouths. Command. . . . He pulled a boat hook from under the gunwale. It was long enough to reach the flare. He doused it. The sea was black again.

He never felt so lonely as in the long slow hours till daybreak.

THIS time he cut the ration in half. The men weren't starving yet; they took it silently. They had to hold the oiler up to swallow his cup of water. His eyes were glazed, bewildered. Maybe he didn't remember. Maybe none of them remembered. Maybe it was all a dream. But he saw the broken skin on his stiffened knuckles and he felt the furtive hate around him.

The morning wore on in a smoldering silence. They were beaten, sullen and beaten. He saw it in their faces, their haggard, unshaven faces, and in their eyes that wouldn't look at him, or at each other, and in their movements, mechanical, without purpose or will.

He felt powerless. They were getting away from him, away from themselves. He tried to talk.

"Good job the sky is overcast. Even in winter they say men take a proper blistering in an open boat if the sun is bright."

They didn't look at him. They huddled in their damp clothes.

"Looked like a rain squall just before daybreak. I thought we'd catch enough to fill the water breaker. It blew around us, but we're bound to get it soon."

The words sounded forced, flat, a little shrill in his own ears. They didn't seem to hear him.

His voice changed. "She's taking water in her seams. Get on that pump up there."

The pump began to sob slowly, like a tired old man crying.

Pretty soon the pump stopped. No one was looking over the sea. They huddled together, waiting.

It was those false lights, he thought bitterly, that took the heart out of them. A man can't stand that agonizing hope, and then the emptiness again.

He tried not to think about it, not to think about anything. He kept a pressure on the tiller, drifting. They could rig up a canvas and make a little way, but his hope was for some ship to return from the scattered convoy. His stubborn, slender hope. After two days—

His eyes sharpened on the horizon, silently. He looked long, while his breath stopped in his throat. He was afraid the men would hear the pounding of his heart. Deliberately he looked away, down at the stump of the spar stanchion, at the skim of water moving under the bottom boards. When he looked up again he was sure.

He spoke quietly. His voice was husky, dry. "There's smoke ahead."

They turned to look. Silent. Staring. His low voice was a rein on them.

"Dead ahead. Blowing to starboard."

A man whispered something hoarsely. Then their voices chorused. They stood up, clawing at each other.

"Oars out!" he shouted.

They scrambled to their places and shipped oars.

"Pull together!"

Eyes on the horizon, he steered for that drifting veil of gray. His heart pounded with gratitude. After fifty-four hours of lonely command the harness was slipping from his shoulders.

In twenty minutes a ship rose up wreathed in smoke, as though a head wind were scattering it. His eyes narrowed; there was no head wind. Steadily the oars pulled them over the leaden sea. She was a tanker, dim with that dirty haze around her. But not too dim to reveal her twisted, gutted superstructure. Two new lines curved down around his mouth. The harness was tight again.

"It's the *Selkirk*," he said.

She hadn't sunk, then. She was still afloat. A derelict. And afire.

In an hour they were close to her. Close enough to stare at the smoke pouring out her portholes, the ravaged plates where the raider's shells had struck, and the heavy web of oil flattening the sea.

They trailed their oars and stared at her.

"Why haven't the tanks gone up?" the bosun asked.

"Molasses in the fore tank," he said. "That's what saved her. And the wind has kept the fire from working aft."

They approached from the lee. They got close enough to see the flames glowing inside her cabins. The ports were all blown out and the smoke wreathed from them as from rows of round, spaced chimneys. The heat came out to them. It licked at their faces like a warning. The wind eddied down and they were smothered in that stifling cloud. Splashing their oars blindly, they pulled away. Tears streamed down their salt-rimed faces.

"We'll have to try from windward," said Second Mate Byer in a choked, thick voice.

The sea was choppy there, with no oil to smooth the water. They pulled up slowly, toward the stern, away from her fiery waist. They got close enough to touch her steel flank with a boat hook. Then a sudden crest of sea flung them upward.

"Fend her off!"

Two oars splintered as they fought that impact.

"Pull! Pull!"

Their backs bent double. Slowly the boat swung round into free water.

It was cold in that wind. But Second Mate Byer wiped the sweat from his forehead. That sea could smash a boat to driftwood against the cliff-like hull.

THEY pulled clear and circled the burning ship. They watched her with weary and wondering faces, the big new *Selkirk* standing up dark and loathsome out of the oil-stained sea. She was hideously heated and they were shivering. Her pantries were lined with food and their meager ration only woke the hunger cramps in their bodies. This was a new mockery.

They wanted to try again, but the second mate tightened his grip on the tiller.

"When the wind goes down," he said. "We'd only break our boat and ourselves against her."

Before night came they speculated. Her fireproof bulkheads must have held. The bridge was a blackened steel skeleton, but her after cabins were intact. Her upper plates were battered but her cargo tanks were still sound. Her wireless house was gutted, but the fire had not worked aft to her engines.

So they eyed her and waited, a dozen wretched, wild-eyed men, circling their own ship while the darkness gathered around them.

"Give us an hour aboard her," said the bosun, "and we can stock up food and water. We'll load this bloody boat to the gunnels."

The muscles curled along Second Mate Byer's unshaven jaw. "We'll board her," he said quietly. "But we won't abandon her again." His voice sharpened. "We'll fight the fire. We'll sail her to England."

From the thwarts the men looked up in a slow wonder. Then a fierceness kindled in their eyes. They had a purpose now. They had a strength. What he read in their faces put a hard quick lump in the Second Mate's throat. No four-

stripe commander was ever more proud of his crew.

That night they slept a little, spelling each other at the oars, keeping their distance, watchful as the angry portholes glowed and the girders shone white hot where her captain's bridge had been.

The wind slacked off at daybreak. By the first gray light they pulled in, close under her counter. They crept alongside carefully, watchfully, with voices silent, as though they could take the ship by stealth.

"Heave it!"

While the rowlocks creaked, holding the boat off that curving fantail, the bosun's arm shot out. A line coiled over the stern rail. He paid it out till the monkey's paw dangled down to a boat hook's reach. Then he swarmed up, hand over hand. Five minutes later he had a pilot ladder over the side and they were climbing.

They pulled the wounded up in cargo slings. A sailor stumbled on the clear deck and fell. They laughed, ruefully. They were too stiff to walk.

Second Mate Byer had already gone forward. They shambled toward the pantry. The decks were hot; the paint was bubbling on the heated bulkheads. Around them was the menacing mutter of flames. Smoke streamed up like a lavish cloud in the green-gold sunrise.

She was burning furiously. The cargo tanks couldn't stand the heat much longer. They looked at each other grimly.

"She won't last the day out," the bosun declared. "But we can get stores out of her. We can stock up the boat—"

Second Mate Byer climbed with a dripping face out of the heated engine hold. His jaw was set like a cutwater. He stared at the bosun as he spoke.

"The starboard engine is still sound. One boiler is undamaged. We can get steam up and the pumps going. We can fight this fire."

The flames roared from amidships. The hot breath was beading all their faces.

"The cargo tanks," the bosun said grimly. "Six thousand tons of fuel oil ready to go up. Even that molasses can explode, for'ard. It must be close to boiling."

The men chewed their lips in silence.

Over the side there was a rending noise. A blank trapped look crossed their faces. They went to the rail and peered over. Their lifeboat was gone. A ragged clump of driftwood trailed at the end of the mooring line.

Suddenly the men grinned.

The second mate's eyes swept them proudly.

"Then we'll go to work," he said. "There's fire raging under our feet. We haven't any charts or any compass. We're only a handful of men."

They still grinned.

THEY carried the wounded oiler down to the engine-room and propped him up on a stool at the operating station. The oil bunkers were riddled with shell fire, but they stretched a hose to the deck couplings and connected the feed pump to the cargo tanks.

The water tender, with his arm in a canvas sling, climbed up out of the boiler-room. He found the second mate checking cargo temperatures with a harassed face.

"We can't regulate oil to the fires. We can't figure how to control the pressure."

The second mate turned on him. "Find out how!" he roared. "Do something! Put men on the hand pumps!"

He drove them.

He drove them all day, till they had the pumps going and streams of water pouring into the waist. He drove them all night, pumping sea water desperately into her while the flames seared their faces and deafened their ears. He drove them at daybreak when the moan of flames was dying and the streams hissed as they played over blackened metal. In thirty hours they had the fire controlled.

Then he drove them with the pumps reversed, this time pouring the blackened sea water out of the ship.

"Build up steam," he begged and bellowed. "Build steam in that boiler."

The hand steering gear on the topside, aft, was shattered. He lashed it up and roved new lines through the blocks. By evening they were ready to sail. His voice rang through the speaking tube.

"Stand by! Full steam ahead!"

A shudder went through the dead ship. Slowly the blades turned, threshing out white circles on the stained sea. The vibrations faltered, picked up, steadied. The blackened tanker, scarred and ruined in the sunset, began to move across the lonely ocean.

For four days and nights the shaft throbbed while Andy Brace, strapped in a stool at the operating station, checked the trembling gauges and listened for a false note in those rocking engines. When he fell unconscious they left the watertender in his place and a seaman trimming her fires. They carried him up through the dark companionways and laid him in his bunk.

Second Mate Byer came in from the night-swept deck. He stood over Andy Brace with an electric torch; they could not spare steam for the dynamo. He pulled the shirt away from the purpled ribs that had never mended. He leaned down and put an ear close to the oiler's heart. He stood there for a moment fingering the scabbed skin on his knuckles. When he was back on the topside again he rubbed the water out of his tormented sleepless eyes.

"Steering by moonlight," muttered the bosun, "without charts. Without a compass. We might come out at—"

"We've got to make it."

Day and night men bent over the hand pumps, forcing fuel oil through the long hose to the boiler. When the hose burst, they were beaten.

He tried to drive them.

"What for?" they asked with sullen faces. "Where to? Sailing into a U-boat trap or a mine field."

He pointed. "There's a man, there, Andy Brace, with his ribs smashed in. He kept at his station till he died."

His head reeled as he patched the leaking hose. But in an hour they were throbbing through the slate-colored sea again.

A WARSHIP appeared just before sunset. It stood up suddenly, sharp against the colored sky. They couldn't spare a man for lookout; it was Second Mate Byer on the windswept poop who saw her. If she was a raider—

His tired eyes sharpened. His heart pounded; his breath stopped in his throat. Against the sunset he counted the four raked stacks of an over-age destroyer.

An hour later a boarding crew had taken over the *Selkirk* and the tired men were falling into their bunks.

Second Mate Byer sat in the pantry with the boarding officer, over a cup of coffee and a double tot of rum.

"But how did you do it?" the boarding officer asked in astonishment. "This ship has been an inferno."

"We left her two days. Then we found her again."

"Hard grind, that."

"Rather."

"And only half a watch of you to fight the fire and get her under way."

"One died, sir."

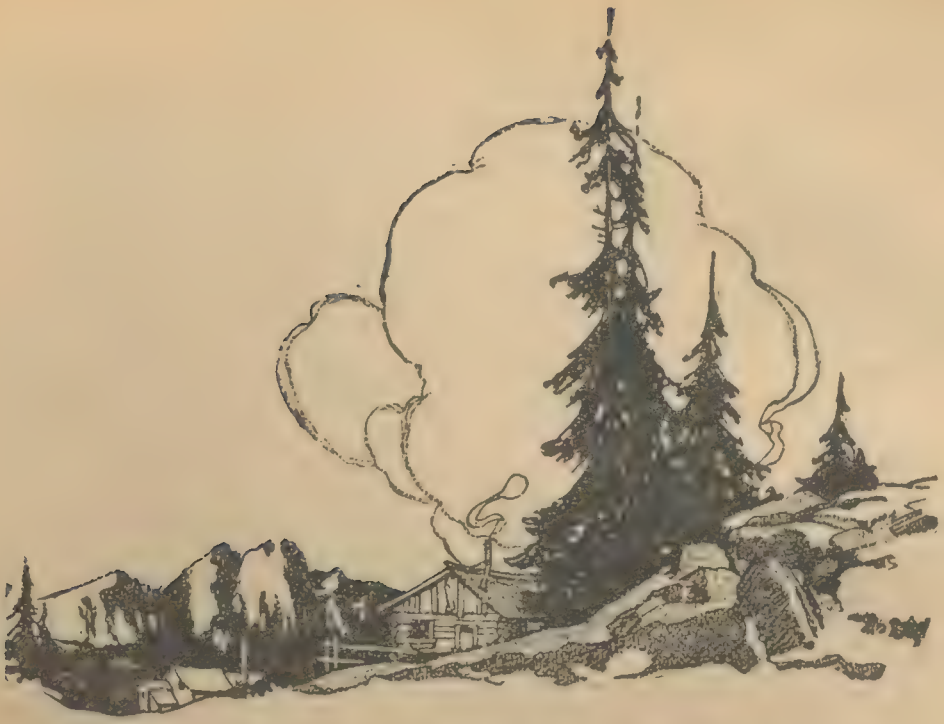
The officer saw the deep-scored lines around his mouth and the stubborn light still burning in his eyes.

"What kept you going, Captain?"

Captain—

Second Mate Byer stared out at the dark sea. He was too tired to think.

"You see, sir—it was my command."



THE CAMP-FIRE

Where readers, writers and adventurers meet

NOT since "Dally Man" back in the March '41 issue have we had the pleasure of publishing one of Walt Coburn's stories. We're mighty glad to welcome him once again to the pages of *Adventure* with "Round-Up at Sun Prairie" and hope he'll be a more constant visitor in months to come. About his new yarn the author writes—

The description of the five outfit round-up is based on fact. We tried it up in Montana when I was a button. And the memory of it all is still mighty clear. The story itself is strictly fiction. But Sun Prairie, the Larb Hills, the badlands between there and the Missouri—that cow country was my back yard when I was a kid on the Circle C ranch.

It was on an Easter Sunday, back around 1912, that I was down in those same Larb Hills with a Stock Inspector and a Deputy Sheriff digging hides out of last winter's ice in a box canyon trap. And the Monday after Easter Sunday we had rounded up a bunch of cattle thieves and had them ready for delivery to John Law at a ranch at the edge of the Larb Hills where they flatten out onto Sun Prairie.

Humpy Jack was one of the most colorful men I ever knew. I've tried to put him on paper as he was. The best nighthawk in Montana, back in the old days. And he could handle that long blacksnake of his even better than I've described it. Evenings on the round-up, before Humpy Jack took his remuda out, he would fool around with that long whip with its wide buckskin popper. When the fast flying bull-bats or nighthawks as they were called, dove through the air catching mosquitoes, Humpy Jack would kill one or two with his whip. He could pick a big horsefly off the rump of a horse with it. His humor was tainted with caustic profanity. Riled and drunk, he had a hellish temper. He was a nighthawk. And he could drive his four horses, bronks for wheelers, hooked to a bed-wagon, anywhere the wagon pilot could ride his horse. Old timers still talk about his nighthawking, his driving, his temper, his fighting ways. Humpy Jack is dead now, but he was my friend.

And any cowpuncher or cowman who was with the Circle C at that time won't

hold anything but a chuckle for the way I've used him in this story. So it's sort of dedicated to men like Johnny Survant, Bill Jaycox, Tom McDonald, Joe Reynolds, Jake Myers. From horse wranglers to cooks and wagon bosses, every man in those outfits was a real man. Some of them are still living. Many of them, like Humpy Jack Davis are now riding the Big Range, have crossed their Big Divide. But on either side of that Big Crossing they will remember the kid who rode his Snowflake pony and tried his damndest to make a hand. And this yarn will bring back memories to those of the outfits who worked that range. And I only wish that we could all be back there riding circle together again. And it is to those cowpunchers, and there wasn't a sorry hand in the five outfits, that I say, "Howdy."

We have been trying to persuade Walt to join our staff of *Ask Adventure* experts and serve as a sort of one-man clearing house for queries that reach us on ranching, cowboy customs, early range history and the cattle country in general but the guy's just too modest. He says—

Sorry, *amigo*, but I just can't cut 'er. I'm strictly a Montana cowhand. I've worked in Arizona and I savvy a lot about the Southwest cowpuncher and his ways. But it would be silly as hell to quote myself as an authority, say, about the way the Texans handle cattle.

What are you going to do with a man like that? We did manage to wangle answers from him to a couple of queries, however, and you'll find them heading the *Ask Adventure* department this month. They made us wish more than ever we could throw a rope over him and get him into the *A.A.* corral for keeps!

FREDERICK WILKINS, who joins the ranks of our Writers' Brigade this month with "Tanks Ain't Horses," is a reserve officer, a first lieutenant of infantry. With the exception of an article on guerrilla warfare in *The Cavalry Journal* it is his first published piece. He writes—note the date of his letter—December 12, '41—

Naturally my interest in the Army has increased since last Sunday, or I might say that everything else has decreased in importance. The Japs just about put an end to my writing, for the time being at least, I'm afraid.

You never know what a dull life you lead until you sit down and try to write something like this. I collect old pistols and prints; fencing is my favorite sport, and as soon as I get in and out of the Army and we have disposed of our Axis pests I want to go back to writing. I majored in history at school; eventually I want to start working up some of the material I've accumulated in various notebooks.

Luck to you, Lieutenant Wilkins, and we'll be waiting for the day when you can get at that typewriter again after the Big Job's done.

BRUCE NELSON, who gives us the article on the news coverage of the Custer fight at the Little Big Horn, is a North Dakota newspaperman himself. As a new name on our contents page he rises, according to *Camp-Fire* custom, to introduce himself—

I was born in North Dakota twenty-eight years ago, so my interest in Dakota's history is quite natural. And besides, it's such a new country yet that there are still old-timers in my own immediate vicinity who are survivors of the Indian-fighting days. I have talked to many of them. Sitting Bull was killed and is buried not fifty miles from where this is being written. That happened only fifty-odd years ago, so you can see we are still pretty close to the old days out here.

I attended the University of North Dakota and left there to spend several years knocking around all the states in the Middle-West as a professional musician. (Jazz band, of course). That period I remember chiefly because I lived on hamburgers most of the time (they say a swing musician's blood gets to be about three-quarters chili-sauce); and the rest of the time I scarcely ate at all. After a too-long period of that, I decided that if I must starve at the arts, I'd pick a more dignified branch of them; and that's how I began to write.

Since that time, I have been reporter, newspaper editor, publisher's represen-

tative and sometimes free-lance writer. My fiction and articles have appeared in various national magazines. Currently, I am a newspaperman and make my home in Bismarck.

I am single and have every prospect of remaining so; and I have no hobbies that I allow to interfere with my natural rest.

"Scalp Scoop" is part of a chapter from a book of Northwest material on which the author is working. Another chapter out of the same manuscript is scheduled for publication in *Adventure* shortly. It is an account of the amazing career of the Marquis de Mores, Duc de Vallombrosa, the French nobleman who became a Bad Lands cattle baron in the early 80's and challenged Teddy Roosevelt to a duel! We'll let you know when it's coming along—and keep you posted on the book, too.

CRIS, who signs the amusing nature-story-in-verse on page 63, is Grace Crisman of Washington. She has contributed both articles and verse to innumerable publications. We had heard somewhere, once-upon-a-time, the etymological legend of the derivation of the word *kangaroo* which she used as a frame for her poem. It was perfectly familiar to us but when we tried to trace it down —no luck. We asked "Cris" where *she* came upon it and she wrote back—

As to your question about the source of the kangaroo story, I remind myself of the woman who said to her husband, "Will you please find my needle? I dropped it in one of those two haystacks. I don't remember which haystack, but you can't miss it. There is only one needle."

Well, here is my answer to your question. My husband found the little item in one of two books: *Answers to Questions* by Frederic J. Haskins (this book contains 5,000 questions and answers); or *Five Thousand New Answers to Questions* by the same author. Mr. Haskins is the director of the Information Bureau in Washington, D.C. When we looked a second time for the item, neither of us could find it. Yet, I'm sure it is there somewhere.

So that's where the marsupial is buried, in a haystack of 10,000 questions, and we're still trying to remember where we lost our needle. Can anybody help? Incidentally, try looking the word up in a dictionary or encyclopedia. And see where it gets you. The *Britannica*, for instance, just says, "the universally accepted, though not apparently the native, designation of . . . etc."

AS a footnote to the third installment of "Live by the Sword" F. R. Buckley writes—

"There would seem to be no honest soldiers, nor indeed no honest men, any more," wrote an Italian commentator in 1501. "Cities are not so much taken by force of arms, as delivered from within. All is accomplished by corruption and treachery."

He was writing thus disapprovingly of Cesare Borgia; whom on the other hand "modern" authors of the period—those who were tired of the medieval ideas of chivalry—were hailing as the proponent of a "new order." They used those words for it—indeed, one of the things which make the hair of the researcher stir on his scalp, is the identity not only of 16th century events, but of four-hundred-year-old phrases, with those of today. It is true that no one wrote of a fifth column—but Cesare Borgia certainly used one. In practically every town that fell to him, he had traitors to assist him—officials who may have believed in the benefits to come from his rule, but who had also received cash considerations in advance. As for the common people, they were systematically deceived by these leaders from their own ranks—and the ironic thing is that some historians of the present century ignore the spiritual degradation and praise Cesare for his "bloodless victories."

The massacre at Sinigaglia, described in this section of "Live by the Sword," is historic fact; and it is indicative of the temper of those times that Machiavelli (who was actually there) describes it as "*bellissimo inganno*"—a most lovely stratagem. To most readers it will probably seem an appalling instance of treachery; and the circumstance that it was designed as a punishment of traitors makes it only the more hideous—in that it was Cesare himself who had taught the *condottieri* the tricks for which he eventually slew them, even as Hitler

inspired Roehm and the others to the abominations for which he blood-purged them in June, 1934.

One of Borgia's favorite tricks—instanced in the murder of Ramiro de Lorqua and the execution of Gramante the dyer—was the use of ruffians to do his dirty work in the first place, and the killing of them subsequently, to increase his personal popularity. Again it seems needless to draw particular parallels!

DOCTOR JOHN F. PARKE of Santa Monica, California writes—

I happened to be rereading my November 1940 issue and noted some one wrote your department concerning wild boar hunting on the Channel Islands off our California coast. I noted also the reply by Frank Winch in which he suggested caution in this type of hunting. I can add a bit to this as I have had experience with these mean cusses. A few years ago we were over there and at that time I got a big old boar which dressed out 385 lbs., (and this was 385 lbs. of bone and muscles and meanness, with six inch tusks) also a few of the smaller boar. The old boy charged me a full two hundred yards up hill even with a wound clear through the body from my .300 Savage which would have killed a deer, and was stopped at 25 feet by shot through eye.

Yes, boar hunting is exciting. Try some time to imagine four hundred pounds of muscle bent on one thing only and that is to carve you up, charging up through hip high grass completely out of sight except for last few feet, and you knowing that to finish things you will only have time for one shot before he is on you. It is surprising for a person to realize how cool and collected one gets when he knows that there is nothing else to do except carry the game through to the end. For various reasons, namely, the general cussedness of the beast, and his usual certain habit of charging if wounded, the dense cover where the boar is found, and his toughness to wounds, I personally consider him the most dangerous of all North American beasts.

As to hunting allowed on the Island now—for any one interested I would suggest that he write the Santa Barbara California Chamber of Commerce as most of the boats leave from that port. Up until a few years ago hunting permits were granted for only one dollar but the Island has been closed for a few years due to some bad sports shooting sheep on the island. There always seems to be some fool who spoils things for the true sportsman. It however may be opened again as the boar and sows soon overrun the islands on the coast and a systematic cleaning out is needed every so often. I have had many phone inquiries as to this hunting so I suggest the following to your readers.

Firearms needed—nothing less than a .300 Savage should be used. My 385 lb. boar took one completely through body and then still charged up over 200 yards to within 25 feet. A .300 Savage, 35 Remington automatic rifle, 348 Winchester, 30-06 or 30-40 Krag would be ideal. As the range will be short use the heaviest soft point bullet you can get for your rifle, the new Remington soft point Core Lock bullets would be perfect.

Side arms? Carry a belt revolver if you wish but I personally would rely on a rifle with a stout bladed hunting knife. Also don't forget a good first aid kit, and pair of field glasses.

The best season to hunt seems to be about November or December, and remember this if you even expect to see a boar. The boar on these islands are keen sighted, with a clever nose and must be hunted with as much if not more caution than deer. Watch the wind and hunt in early morning and at dusk, near water if possible. Watch for freshly plowed ground where these old boys root for wild potato, etc. The boar is like a buck deer, he usually travels alone but in the low, swampy places. If you see a sow with half grown pigs stand still. If you alarm her and she grunts your boar hunt is over. By the way, these half grown pigs in November are darn good eating so take a few solid point bullets along.

In closing, one last word of caution. These are not domestic pigs gone wild but have a strain of the Russian boar in them. Treat them with caution, don't go near a wounded boar, finish him off at a distance and NEVER NEVER hunt them alone. I did and nearly lost my life. Always hunt in pairs, and DO NOT take any green horn hunters in the party. Be sure you have real hunters and marksmen or a guide to back you up.

When we get a letter as interesting as

the one above it makes us feel mighty good to know that *Adventures* don't always find their way into a wastebasket immediately after they've been read for the first time; that occasionally they not only get filed away for a second look but really get a return engagement.

IN AN effort to anticipate any queries which might arise regarding that 600,000 rupee fine mentioned by William Ashley Anderson in his *Camp-Fire* note last month—it was levied, if you'll recall, by the Italians in Ethiopia on Mr. Anderson's friend, A. Besse, for aiding the Ethiopians—we wrote the author of "More Than the Flesh" to ask how come rupees in that part of the world, under Eyetie domination at the time, instead of *lira* or even the native Abyssinian equivalent. He answers—

> The report of that fine appeared in news dispatches. It was stated in rupees. The fine may have been in some other currency, and the value expressed in rupees. I doubt if there were 600,000 lira in the country south of Eritrea at that time; certainly Besse was not trading with lira. Most of his trading was done from Aden (where the trade currency is pounds Sterling; Indian rupees; American dollars. Maria Theresa dollars are traded in as bullion) and Jibuti (where trade currency was similar to Aden, plus the franc). There was a small amount of Abyssinian currency, but not much. Native trade was usually by barter.

WE TRIED, too, to anticipate any comeback on Tom Roan's use of *pañas* instead of *pirañas* in "Jambi" back in the February issue by querying the author ahead of time on the spelling. He gave us his authorities—Up de Graff, the Roosevelts and Dr. Dickey—and we thought that was that. Apparently it wasn't for now comes the following interesting letter from Fred W. Sigmund of Alexandria, Virginia who throws that eminent triumvirate of experts to the very fish in question—

> I have enjoyed the stories in *Adventure* for many years and I was very much interested in Tom Roan's story "Jambi" in your February '42 issue. His story is an excellent piece of writing and has just the right atmosphere and locale.
>
> For the sake of a good argument, however, I wish to say that the use of the word "pañas" is not correct, no matter what formidable authorities are called in for support. Quechua and Aymara are the languages of the Ecuadorian Indians living way up in the cordillera or Andes. The Inca language is entirely different. Quechua and Aymara are still spoken today but no Jivaro ever heard a Quechua Indian and the same holds true vice versa. The correct word to use around the upper reaches of the Amazon is "carneros" or "pirañas." The latter word is correct for almost any region in South America where these carnivorous fish are predominant.
>
> There is no Murato tribe around the headwaters of the Upper Amazon. The "Aguarunas" can be found from the Pongo de Manseriche all along the Alto (Upper) Marañon to where the Rio Cenipa joins the Alto Marañon and further on where the Alto Marañon turns sharply south toward Peru. The "Huambizes" are at home from the Pongo de Manseriche all along the Rio Santiago, the Rio Yaupi and up in the cerros (foothills) of the Cutucua mountains. The Pongo de Manseriche is a cleft in the hills where the Alto Marañon and the Rio Santiago join to form the Upper Amazon. At Iquitos (Peru) the Upper Amazon and the Ucayali join to form the large Amazon river. From Iquitos to the Pongo de Manseriche is fairly safe country for travel, unless one strays from the river. The Pongo is the gateway to the Jivaro country where headhunting is the favorite pastime.
>
> "Mangiamangia" is a particular leaf chewed by the Jivaros to cure rheumatism and to ward off the effects of the bite of certain snakes. "Masato" is the correct word for the intoxicating beverage produced by having the women chew yucca roots and allowing the mash to ferment.
>
> Jivaros do not count like white people. One closed fist means five, a closed fist and one finger raised on the other hand means nine, three fingers raised on one hand means two. Two closed fists and one foot means fifteen. The correct word for poison is "tzies" or "curare." I never heard the word "jambi." An "apachi" (white man) who takes a woman of a Jivaro tribe for a wife becomes a member of the tribe and is absolutely safe from attack by any member of the tribe as long as the apachi behaves

himself. He might be killed by a member of another tribe, as an Aguaruna will make use of every opportunity to kill a Huambize and take his head.

No one trading in the Jivaro country will ever trade even the worst rifle or even a single bullet to a Jivaro. Rifles and bullets are used on human game only, and for no other purpose, white game being preferred as white heads are rare and hard to get. A rifle in the hands of a Jivaro means a white man killed somewhere. The Jivaro always tries to recover the spent bullet, remolds it and fits it into the shell after filling the shell with a percussion cap and powder. The results with such a bullet are poor but better than nothing. The muzzle loading escobeta is a trade article together with powder, percussion caps and loose buckshot.

My authority for the above: In 1928-29 I traveled from Iquitos to the Pongo de Manseriche, up and down the Alto Marañon, back to the Pongo, up the Rio Santiago to the Yaupi and the first Ecuadorian fort or Comisaria. From there I crossed the Cutucua mountains to Cuenca in Ecuador.

We sent Mr. Roan a copy of Mr. Sigmund's letter and the author of "Jambi" sticks by his guns in this wise—

Mr. Sigmund writes a swell letter, one that should be read with great interest by the readers of *Adventure*. However, I think the gentleman picks a very small point for argument, and yet it is one that could have no end of windage. My authority comes from people who have spent years in the jungles down there. As his letter states the whole argument, I do not have to go into it beyond reminding him there are many names for those carnivorous fish.

This includes cribe, piraya or pirai, and—in some of the slugged pools of the eastern southern States of the U. S., they're just plain pirate perch.

Come again, Mr. Sigmund. You make mighty good reading.

Anyone else want to get in on the controversy? And did anyone else spot the news item under a Quito, Ecuador dateline of January 10, which told of guns and troops having to be sent by plane to defend the oil-camp town of Mera from attacks by a thousand wild Jivaro Indians?

WE rather expected to hear from Ol' Man Wiggins of Oregon about that double-barreled cannon mentioned here not long ago. And sure enough he's had it on his mind all along. Just got around to it. He writes—

The request for information on the double-barreled cannon at Athens, Ga., may be a bit wide of my angle of fire, but I'll do my best, anyhow.

As I recall the story, given the press some years back, by a man who had been one of the original gun crew at the testing of the piece, it was cast at the Tredegar Iron Works, at Richmond, Virginia, about 1862; the idea was that two balls, connected with a long chain, would be loaded, one ball to each barrel, the chain hanging out the muzzle, and when fired, the balls would fly at a slight angle, drawing the chain taut, and as the old gentleman expresses it so charmingly, "it would mow down a whole company of Yank Infantry at once."

The gun was cast successfully, mounted and loaded per schedule. *But*, when fired, in some unknown manner, one ball got a start on the other, and they and the chain waltzed about the scene with disastrous results to onlookers and gunners alike. I judge the ballistics of the balls and chain loading must have been somewhat on the order of the Gaucho's bolas.

According to the article, it never fired but the one full charge, and was used afterwards only for firing blank salute charges, which it did very well. I saw a cut of it in a paper, years back, but had no idea it was still in existence.

EITHER in *Camp-Fire* or *Ask Adventure* in a recent issue, the statement was made in answer to an inquiry that rattlesnakes are rarely found at an altitude above 5,000 feet. Leonard K. Smith of Newport, Arkansas offers his personal kill-record which seems to indicate that he's either encountered some mighty unusual rattlers or else that that word "rarely" should maybe be qualified a little.

One at Fisher's Peak, near Trinidad, Colo., at an altitude of over 8,000 feet.

One on prairie east of Trinidad, altitude of a little over 6,000 feet.

One on Wind River Reservation, Wyo., at altitude of 7,500 feet.

One in Yellowstone Park, at altitude of over 7,000 feet.

One in Texas Panhandle, between Clayton, N.M. and Dalhart, altitude about 4,000 feet.

Four above 5,000 feet, one below. That's all the rattlers I've ever had personal dealings with.

Anyone else want to record a census of high-crawling rattlesnakes?

IT'S not all skittles and beer, trying to put together an issue of a magazine called *Adventure* in these parlous and exciting times. The greatest adventure of *all* time is being enacted day by day, with the whole world for a stage, and any other adventure seems to pale into insignificance beside it. For many years this magazine has prided itself on the authentic background and verisimilitude of detail in the fiction as well as fact stories which it has published. Now, when the very backgrounds themselves are shifting almost overnight, to say nothing of the people who move against them, it becomes increasingly difficult to sift the authentic from the counterfeit. Authors who could have been depended on absolutely, two short years ago, to give us credible stories laid in a hundred far-flung corners of the world today confess honestly that many of the things they once held familiar they can no longer vouch for. Even the correspondents on the actual war fronts of the world are forced to contradict themselves from one headline to the next and admit as error what was, or seemed to be, accurate the day before.

However, we believe one thing has remained constant despite the upheaval. Good stories are still good stories and *Adventure* is doing its damnedest to find and print just those while continuing, as far as humanly possible, to maintain its reputation for authenticity of background and detail in its fiction. It would be easier if we could fall back on historical pieces, Westerns, stories that ignored the war completely and frankly dealt with another day. But this, of course, is impossible. Any magazine called *Adventure* which left out completely this greatest adventure in history wouldn't be worthy of its name.

An expression of opinion from readers at this time would be helpful. We'd like to know, for instance, what proportion of stories with a current, timely slant should be included in each issue. What you feel about humorous yarns. And how much sheer "escape" fiction should be printed. And even just what constitutes "escape" fiction. For instance—just within the last week we have been chided for our article on General McClellan back in the February issue, told that we ought to be ashamed of ourselves for resurrecting the Civil War at this time, that such pieces are disrupting to the national unity!

Isn't that a bit thick—or is it?

We repeat—it's not all skittles and beer!

—K.S.W.

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ASK ADVENTURE

Information you can't get elsewhere

SING, cuss or pray—and try to keep your pony between your legs when the herd stampedes!

Request:—May I request your help in supplying an accurate, detailed description of a cattle stampede during the old Texas days. The reason for this request is that some authorities claim that cowboys used six shooters pointed to the ground in order to frighten the leading longhorns of the stampede, thereby halting and redirecting them, with the result that the herd would scatter. Another report states that cowboys never used any shooting arms because the noise would add to the herd's panic.

—Alfred L. Hall-Quest
311 East 72nd Street
New York City

Reply by Walt Coburn:—I am sorry I can't help you much concerning the question you ask about an old time Texas stampede. Because I never punched cows in Texas. And when it comes to cattle runs or stampedes and shooting, I reckon that most old time cowhands would get into one of the hottest arguments you ever listened to if the subject of shooting around a stampede came up.

And the nearest, therefore, that I can come to telling you about shooting around a stampeding herd would be this. That all the shooting a crew of cowhands could do would never in the world stop a stampede. I have seen a few. I don't recall any shooting to try to turn the leaders. But I have heard old time cowhands say that they had shot in the air, NOT AT THE GROUND, to swing the lead steers and get them to milling.

It would depend a lot upon the kind of cattle you were handling. And upon the men who were riding up on the point trying to turn the lead steers in an effort to get the herd circling back on itself.

I can't give you any detailed description of those old-time Texas longhorn cattle. An open letter asking information in *Adventure* might get you all kinds of differing replies. I asked a few old cowhands down along the border about it and their stories varied except in one detail. That was that every man did his damndest to get that herd to milling. And to get the job done without crippling too many cattle or knocking too much tallow off their bones.

Taking a certain bunch of cattle, the flat country, and not too many prairie dog or badger holes and you wouldn't do any shooting. You would ride out the stampede and gradually turn the leaders back in a big old circle that would eventually pin-wheel the herd and not cripple many cattle.

On the other hand if your lead steers are sulled and won't turn, shooting them might turn the trick. But before you'd pull a gun you'd try slapping at them with your slicker or coat or coiled saddle rope.

And you'd save what cartridges you had in your six-shooter just in case your horse stepped in a dog hole and you might take a chance on piling up steers with that gun to save from getting tromped to death.

You can hear all kinds of yarns about stampedes and the dudes who come west usually get it told to them almighty scarey by dude wranglers who never got within a hundred miles of a cattle run. Or some old cowpuncher with a few drinks under his belt will throw a long yarn into some dude who comes around asking a lot of silly questions. And all those dudes go back east with what they figure is their own real McCoy version of a wild cattle stampede. And the dude wrangler or the old timer will get a few chuckles out of it.

"Supposin'," the cowboy says to the other cowboy, "that we went back East and asked a lot of silly questions about the customs and personal lives of them

dudes? You reckon they'd load us up as bad as we load them?"

So there you have it, mister. You can get all kinds of replies to your question. As for a 'detailed description' of a cattle stampede, that's a large question. Because every cowhand in the outfit the night of that stampede is just too damned busy keeping his pony on its feet and out of the path of them steers to take time to look around and jot down notes. He's riding for his life on a black night and the clashing of horns and the thunder of hoofs is making the earth shake and you could shoot off all the guns you could pack and you wouldn't be able to hear the sound of a .45 six-shooter in your own ears. If you get the notion that a gun might turn those lead steers, go ahead and shoot it. Or yell or cuss or pray or sing to 'em. It don't make much difference. A stampede is a mighty big thing. A mighty dangerous thing to get in the way of. I've ridden alongside or behind the drag end of a few when I was punching cows. But they were not Texas longhorns and I don't know how those Texas boys stopped 'em. Some like as not used guns to make a noise or a gun flash that might turn 'em. Others cussed or sang or prayed. They tried to keep their ponies on their feet and out of the way. And each old timer will give you his own version of it.

But get this fact straight, mister. No cowpuncher crew ever tried to scatter a stampede. They might try to split it in two later. But mostly they wanted them steers kept together. Milled in a big old wide circle until they slowed down and their tongues hung out. And they stood there while cowpunchers on played out horses rode around 'em slow and felt glad that they still had a pony between their legs.

SIXTEEN feet of bull whip to wrap around a Jap's neck!

Request:—I am interested in whips. I can't find any expert listed under the Ask Adventure service that could give me the information that I want. You may know of someone that could answer the following questions on the bull whip:

1. Are the whips hand braided or machine made?

2. Are there any books published giving the history, manufacture and use of the bull whips?

3. I own a sixteen-foot whip but I have trouble in controlling the end of the tip. Whenever I snap it the tip hits me on the leg or arm. How do I go about it so I won't take off an ear when I snap the whip?

4. I have lots of time in the army to practice and I would like to be an expert at handling the whip when I get out of the army. Could you give me any instruction?

—Pvt. Nathan Schupak,
c/o *Adventure*

Reply by Walt Coburn:—Here is the only reply I can make to Private Nathan Schupak about bull whips.

Cowpunchers never used a bull whip. Bullwhackers back in the old days used 'em. And freighters with long string teams.

Like as not those bull whips were hand braided. But they were sold in saddle shops and seldom braided by the men who used them. Nighthawks like Humpy Jack Davis used a bull whip to crack of a night to pop a little bunch of horses that had strayed off, back into the remuda. But they never hit a horse with those whips. They braided on a long, wide buckskin popper that would make a lot of noise. It would crack like a pistol and crack close to the horse that was leading his pardners off into some coulee. And I have seen Humpy Jack (now dead), kill what we called bull bats with his whip or snap a man's hat off with it. But he was a bull whip expert. The rest of us would try it and wrap it around our necks. It takes time and practice. There are men on the stage or with circuses who can handle a bull whip mighty accurate. No doubt Hollywood has a few such men.

I know of no books on the subject but that ain't saying that somebody might not have written a book about the bull whip. I imagine the name comes down from the old ox-team days when there were men called bullwhackers. And later the freighters used such whips. Or nighthawks and horse wranglers. But not cowpunchers.

But mebbyso now that the Japs have taken a bushwhacker crack at us Private Nathan Schupak won't have much time to practice popping his legs with his bull whip. But anyhow, good luck, Nat. And wrap that sixteen foot whip around some Jap or Heinie's neck!

We seem to recollect that years ago,

either on the vaudeville stage or in the circus, we were thrilled by an Australian performer who did miracles with whips of all sorts and lengths—snuffed out candles, whipped handkerchiefs out of the breast pockets of hardy volunteers from the audience and so on. And the longest whip he used was something like forty feet! Anyone else recall the guy?

MILLIN, Mallin, Mullen, Mullins, Millen—'tis a' ain.

Request:—I have just been reading Gordon MacCreagh's reply, in the December issue, to the brother Scot regarding the making of kilts and some of his remarks led me to believe that he might be able to give me some information on plaids.

I am of Scottish descent, at least our line was traced to Scotland by a female cousin who was trying to satisfy requirements for enrollment in the D. A. R., and for years I have been trying to find out what clan we belonged to, design and colors of clan plaid, where one can buy the proper clan plaid—at least enough to make a tie—where I could get additional information on the clan, such as names of books and where they can be secured.

Our name has always been spelled as given below so far as we have been able to trace. Note that there are no a's or e's in it.

—A. E. McMillin,
140 High St.,
Watertown, N. Y.

Reply by Gordon MacCreagh:—And a shame it is to some careless ancestor of yours that he let the spelling go so far awry.

The Clan is MacMillan, of course, despite your anxiety to make clear that there are no a's or e's in the writing of it.

You must realize that thousands of names, handed down by word of mouth by the old timers who were not able to read or write, became, first, mispronounced, and later, when written by some person whose schooling was none too good at best, woefully mis-written.

So MacMillan you are, meaning the son of Millain. Pronunciation variations range all the way through Millin, Millen, Mullen, Mallen, Mullin, Mullins, and so on.

A Celtic clan, allied to the Argyles and Campbells. Your original ancestor was Gille Maol, meaning the Man of Mull. Apparently so named because he came from there to settle in Knapdale, or possibly first on the shores of Loch Arkaig.

Your tartan? Havers mon, how can one describe a tartan in writing? It is of general orange background crossed with red.

Books, data? Who knows whether your inquiries will ever reach the other side these days? But perhaps you can get some small pamphlets from

John Adamson,
The Scot's House,
15 Everett St.,
Jamaica Plain, Boston, Mass.

A tie? There is a domestic firm that makes clan tartan ties. I don't know the name; but the trade brand is Botany neckties. Any haberdasher should be able to locate the manufacturer and get you a MacMillan tie.

ALONG the old Texas cattle trails.

Request:—I should like to know the route of the trails listed below.

1. Chihuahua Trail through Texas during the Civil war days about 1868.
2. Old Spanish trail through Texas.
3. Sonora Trail.
4. Arisciachi Trail of Mexico.

I would like to know all I can learn about the trails, the old landmarks etc.

Also are there any unfriendly Indians along the Yaqui River in Mexico?

Is there a town or towns by the following names, Guaynopa or Rio Aros, Mexico? In State of Sonora?

Next summer a group of friends are planning on following the trails, will it be dangerous, and what equipment will we need?

My grandfather told of his wagon train being raided, and half the train burned by Indians, at a place called Horseshoe Crossing or else Castle Gap, do not know which, but is there a crossing or Gap by that name and what is the location if possible!

—E. Myers,
Lock Box 27
Mt. Pleasant, Mich.

Reply by J. W. Whitaker:—The struggle of the early cattle raisers of Texas to find market for their excess animals forms one of the most colorful chapters of southwestern history. Just when trail driving began probably will never be

known. At an early date however the settlements in Louisiana opened markets for Texas products and early maps show a contraband trail skirting the coast and connecting Texas and Louisiana areas indicating trade despite legal restrictions that prevailed. However the South Texas cattle surplus increased and by that time Texas won her independence.

The Opelausas Trail had come into existence paralleling the coast and leading from the Texas cattle region to settlements in Louisiana. Many Texas cattle were marketed in New Orleans and were distributed throughout the Mississippi Valley and even shipped to the West Indies.

During the Civil War many cattle went to the Confederate Army over an eastward extension known as the Vicksburg Trail, ending at Vicksburg. There was a parallel trail known as the Natchez Trail, so called because Natchez, Miss. was its eastern terminus.

In the West, the gold rush in California, beginning in 1849, created a good market and many Texas cattlemen braved the dangers of the long drive. The principal trail to this market swung through West Texas to the Pecos in the vicinity of Horsehead Crossing, then swung northward to a point near the New Mexico-Texas line and thence westward.

The first northern trail over which some driving was done, even prior to the Civil War, was the Shawnee Trail, taking its name from Shawnee Town. Originating in south and central Texas this trail came north leaving the State at Preston Crossing in Grayson County, Texas, on the Red River. On this trail cattle went as far as St. Louis. Owners of crossings along this route began to erect tall gates so the trail shifted westward from Ft. Worth and crossed Red River at Sivoll's Bend in Cook County or at Red River station in Montague County. This route has become known as the Chisholm Trail. Later the route of the main North-South cattle trail was pushed northward leaving the state at Dean's Crossing, in what is now Wilbarger County. This trail was known as the Western or Dodge Trail.

John Chisholm established his Denton County Ranch in the early fifties. He was active in supplying meat to the Confederate Armies during the Civil War and drove herds eastward to Natchez and Vicksburg. It is possible that he drove herds through Oklahoma.

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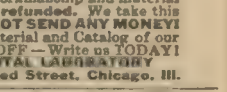

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ing portion of the famous North-South trail was that between Austin and Ft. Worth. North of Ft. Worth there was a tendency to shift the route while South of Austin there was a branching out of feeder trails that led in from the South Texas ranges.

The Goodnight-Loving Trail was opened soon after the Civil War when Chas. Goodnight and his partner, Oliver Loving, drove to market at Ft. Sumner, starting from the vicinity of Ft. Belknap near Graham, Texas, and going via the old stage route through Ft. Phantom Hill and Ft. Chadbourne up the middle Concho to Horsehead Crossing on the Pecos and up the Pecos on the West side to the channel of the Delaware, thence westward along this stream.

The cattle trails of Texas delivered some ten million head during the period from 1867 to 1890 when trail driving died out due to the spread of the network of railroads. Parts of this supply went to the northern packing houses, but a larger portion went to stock the ranges of the great plains north to the Canadian border and westward to the Rockies.

The old Spanish Trail was the route of the Spanish explorers from St. Augustine, Fla., to San Diego, Calif., entering Texas near Orange to Houston, San Antonio, on to El Paso through Texas. The trail in the past few years has become part of the Texas highway system. The above mentioned trails are the best known. There may be others not mentioned, being short feeders to the main trails.

In the mountains of Sonora there is a remnant of the once powerful and savage tribe of the Yaqui Indians who have not as yet been conquered by the Mexican Government. These Indians have their own strongholds in the mountain fastness and have been left strictly alone for many years.

The Yaqui River has been the scene of several gold rushes in the past. The natives are rather friendly as a general rule.

In the mountains of Sonora there is Guaynopa or Rio Oras in the State of Sonora. The names of many small towns or villages have been changed several times since coming into existence by bandit or rebel chieftains of past years who took over places for their own headquarters.

The crossing that your grandfather spoke about must have been Horsehead Crossing on the Pecos in Reeves or Pecos Counties, for the old crossing is

gone now and bridges on the highway have taken their places. It would not be dangerous to follow the old trails for they are highways now.

You have been on fishing and camping trips, no doubt. Such equipment used then can be used. Tourist camps are located on most of the old trails, with supplies of all kinds to be had so you need not be uneasy about making the trip.

If there are any other questions you care to ask about the territory I am covering for *Adventure*, do not hesitate to write.

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Request:—I would like to have your advice on the construction of a band saw mill of a size that could handle logs up to 60 inches in diameter and 20 feet long. I want to know where I can buy blades and the kind of teeth for hard and soft wood.

I am interested in a small mill to be operated with the help of 3 to 5 men. I would like to use a carriage with a sawyer's feed lever, or put an offset on the carriage I have. The things I would most like to know would be the length and width of blades best suited for about 45 H.P. and the size of wheels for such blades.

I am an experienced sawyer with circle saws and would like to know if bands would be more efficient and cut more accurate lumber.

—Roscoe E. Williams,
Hallsville, Mo.

Reply by Hapsburg Liebe:—A bandmill with 6-ft. diameter wheels, if not too short-coupled, will handle logs 60 inches in diameter. Of course, length of log is a matter of carriage and carriage-track length. A bandmill carriage must have an "offset" to keep log from catching behind saw and pulling it off on the backup, as well as to overcome any outward "lead" in the saw. Most 6-ft. mills take a band 10 inches wide, which may be of 16- or 17-gage. 16-gage takes out a hair more kerf than a 17-gage, but is stronger and will take more feed, giving less trouble in the matter of cutting straight lines when growing dull. In ordering bandsaws, specify hardwood or softwood teeth (difference is in spacing, and pitch, and angle of the backs; usually 1-⅝ths inch point-to-point spac-

(Continued on page 129)

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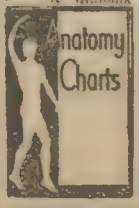

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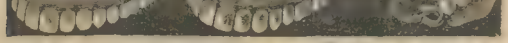

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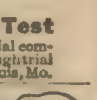

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Baseball—FREDERICK LIEB, care of *Adventure*.

Basketball—STANLEY CARHART, 99 Broad St., Matawan, N. J.

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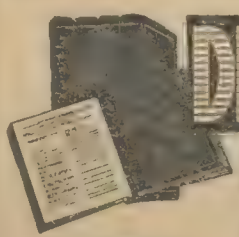

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★Australia and Tasmania—ALAN FOLEY, 18a Sandridge St., Boudl, Sydney, Australia.

★South Sea Islands—WILLIAM MCCREADIE, "Ingle Nook," 89 Cornelia St., Wiley Park, N. S. W.

Hawaii—JOHN SNELL, Deputy Administrator, Defense Savings Staff, 1055 Bishop St., Honolulu, Hawaii.

Madagascar—RALPH LINTON, Dept. of Anthropology, Columbia University, New York City.

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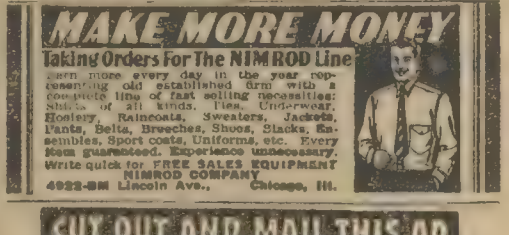
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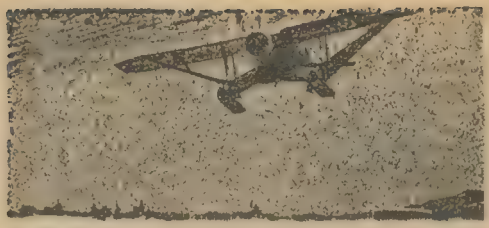

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—in spite of everything, drag him back up to the heights again—and let that "Partner" business settle itself later. Louis C. Goldsmith, who has flown freight in Alaska himself, gives us a great novelette of the blizzard-swept northern airways.

Young Mr. Fordyce was "A Bottle A Day" man and if the Captain of the *Amaryllis Keene*, or even a Nazi sub, happened to get in the way of his matutinal flask, it was just too bad. Richard Howells Watkins tells you all about it in a glorious tale of the Merchant Marine; "Everest Tiger" by Hal G. Evarts takes you up the slopes of Chedo La, deep in the Himalayan fastnesses, roped to the waist of Passang, the Sherpa guide, on a pilgrimage of high adventure; "A God with Clay Feet" by T. S. Gladden—the author is a Navy man—is a gripping yarn of our pigboat fleet in the Pacific *today*.

"Hell and Hawkins" by L. L. Foreman is a tale of the mountain men who trapped and traded through the Apache country; "Black Pigeons" by Walter C. Brown, a gripping story of the warrior hillmen of Lung-Shan, direct descendants of the great Khan, tells how they meet the menace of the monkey men from Nippon; then there's a great fact story by Brian O'Brien on the Hudson River whaling industry; plus the last stirring installment of F. R. Buckley's "Live by the Sword" and the usual departments and features found only in—

On Sale April 10th

(Continued from page 123)

ing is okay for softwood, and 1-¾ths for hardwoods. Narrower swaged points for hardwoods, of course. Faster the feed, deeper the gullets. You know, I am sure, that bandsaw teeth, unlike circular logsaw teeth, are solid, never inserted.) Bands cut faster than circulars only when they're *right.*

45 HP is light power for big logs and a bandmill. Bands pulled down will make cracked lines, perhaps burn, stretch and take a lot of rolling and hammering to put them back to where they ought to be as concerns tension, level, tire, and crown. They should run at least 8,500 line feet per minute—rim speed of the wheels; you can figure it. Bandmills are expensive to operate. For instance, you'd need a band filer, and they're cheap at $5 a day; filers rarely do anything else. (This was my job for years; I made $9 per day on my last job, which was a double-band with 9-ft. wheels). Usually bandmills have steam feed, and steam-feed sawyers come high too. Four good saws are needed. One running, one being sharpened, one on the bench, and one ready in case of striking iron or stone. 5 hours is a long time for a band to run without a change! Band filing-room equipment is expensive—hand swage, shaper, grinder, leveling slab of castiron, hard-faced anvil, roll, forge, etc., etc.—but nowadays you might get in touch with some second-hand machinery outfit and save a lot of money; this applies, also, to bandmill machinery—the mill itself, edger, trimmer, slasher, live-rolls, even boiler and engine and belting, shafting, pulleys, everything. But don't buy used saws.

I never saw a bandmill run with 3 to 5 men. There's always been a filer, sawyer, two carriage men (setter and dog man), a pull-down man, a slab man, edgerman, trimmerman, log deck man, a man or so to get the logs up, and a man or so to take the lumber away, not to mention a man or so on the yard. And there's a fireman, and maybe a man to take care of belts and shafting and maybe the engine.

Length of bands depends upon size of wheels and distance between. 30-odd feet on a 6-ft. mill. Shorter-coupled mills take faster feed. Phoenix is a good little mill. So is the Clark. *The keepup of a bandsaw is difficult. They ruin lumber fast if they're not "right."* The biggest thing they have over the circular is saving, in kerf—saving perhaps one board in 7 or 8. 20 M board feet per day is a fair run for a 6-ft. mill in good shape.

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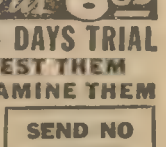

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